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BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE

A Romance

BY

EDITH STEWART DREWRY



Books you may hold readily in your hand are the most useful, after all

DR. JOHNSON

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1886

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PROLOGUE.

I HAVE only a few words to say about this strange Manuscript, which came into my hands one winter's night.

It was given me by one who had received it from the writer; and what he has of necessity left blank, another hand has filled in. Let it suffice that I knew the writer and those of whom he speaks.

BAPTIZED WITH A CURSE.

MANUSCRIPT I.

SINKING DOWN.

“Sinking down through infinite depths of the darkness.”

LONGFELLOW.

Is that the murmur and hum of the vast city below? Are there many in that seething multitude like me, or is there one whose memory recalls my face and name? No, better not, oh, better not, lest they couple the memory with a curse! Does the same moon shine on them that is looking in on me grimly, mocking me with its ghastly brightness? Can it be true what they say? Is there any hell, save that in my own soul, any tortures greater than remorse? They tell me there is a God, all-just, all-merciful, all-powerful; but if so omnipotent, why did he let sin enter the world? Yet when I ask them that, they answer, “It is a mystery to be believed by faith.” Why do I shudder at their answer? Is it like the echo of other years? does it seem as if I heard again the low plaintive voice of that foreign child? Do I remember the past? do I not? Is there an hour, a word, a look, a face that I do not see and remember as if it were yesterday? Do I not live over again every moment of my life, back, back to my childhood? I was innocent then, O God! I was innocent then!

Do I recall the sunlit nursery where I played as a child, but oftener, far oftener knelt by the window, looking drearily out through the bars into the crowded street, and wondering, in a sad vague way, what it would be like to have brothers and sisters of my own age, and a fair, gentle-spoken, golden-haired mother, such as I never knew, who might have taught me to be good?

Do I recall that when I heard any of my child-playmates talk, it might be of having been to church last Sunday, or of having said the Lord's Prayer to their mother, I laughed scoffingly, and asked them, “What was that?” and felt a strange pride and pleasure at their wonder and shrinking from me. Was I not a type of the secret that makes at least half the scoffers and infidels? Yet it was no pretence to ask them “What was that?” How should I know, who never heard it? My mother sneered at what men called religion; and instead of it, spoke to me and let me read of strange beliefs and theories of the

German school, at once sceptical and visionary. I took it in too well, and yet I can remember that through it all there would sometimes struggle upward, like a flower choked by weeds, a vague yearning for something more pure and simple; something that in after-years often checked the sneer on my very lips, and made me shrink in terror. What if it should be? what if, after all, that foreign child was right? Shall I ever get the memory of her face away from my mental vision? Am I going mad? Is the mind I have misused gone before me to the powers of darkness? I dare not believe. She would be there to accuse me, with that face, with that voice, "That is the man!"

Oh, for one touch of what I never knew! Oh, for one grain of faith!

MANUSCRIPT II.

THE STRANGE RIDER.

Do I remember the earlier years as distinctly as those nearer? Yes, every detail but too minutely. Shall I go back to the very day *she* came, a child to my mother's house? I was past early boyhood then, being sixteen. Can I do it? Well, well, no matter; it must be.

It was a fine afternoon in autumn, so fine that I soon forsook the house and wandered out. Though restless and companionless, I found myself straying back in an hour, or it might be less.

The sun was lower, but it still threw its light over the river, which wound along below, passing the gardens of our house; while the high-road leading to the little town skirted the summit of a rise commanding a very fine view, of which our old-fashioned Grange formed the foreground. I turned off the road and lay down behind some furze-bushes, whose height sheltered me from the dust. Perhaps I fell asleep, or sunk into a dreamy reverie, I don't know which; but I was roused by the sound of voices on the road behind me, one of which was strange, the other I knew for that of the village clerk, a man who had seen better days and was superior to his present position, but withal the most inveterate gossip in the parish.

I turned gently, and resting on my arm, remained so, able to hear and see too through the bushes. The old clerk, Mr., or more generally Dick, Ferguson, was standing with his back towards me, leaning on his huge silver-topped stick, his left hand resting on his hip, his left foot flung a little before the other, and his lengthening shadow falling quaintly across the road till it reached the stretch of common on the other side. The other speaker was evidently a stranger, and was mounted on a noble chestnut horse, which he sat with the graceful ease and command of a finished horseman. As far as I could judge, he might have been somewhere about four-and-twenty: his figure was very fine, tall, slight, and lithe; and the hand that held the reins was not white, because he was a dark man, but beautifully made, small, nervous, chiselled as by a sculptor's chisel—the hand of a man

of birth. Of his face I could see little, for he wore one of those graceful broad-brimmed felt hats, drawn low on his brow and set slightly on one side, so that it completely shadowed him, but I could see that he had a slight, silky, dark mustache. Over his left shoulder, too, was thrown a long somewhat heavy cloak, which did not seem to me of English make; and indeed there were two things about him which especially struck me. His voice was soft and very musical, pleasant to hear, but there was something in his accent, in the figure of speech, in his *tout ensemble*, that was not English, though if he were foreign, I was quite uncertain what nation to assign to him. Secondly, he gave me the impression of a man ready to assume, if not already under, some disguise.

What were the first words I heard from him, then?—a simple enough question, most natural to a stranger—"Friend, what do you call that small town along the road there?"

"It is called Stone Heath, sir," returned the little clerk, glancing curiously up at the tall rider; "it's a very ancient place."

"It looks old. I have just come through it. A very quaint place. How far is it to London?"

"A long way, sir, but the rail goes from here, if you are going there."

"A thousand thanks. I saw it. You have a fine view from here," sweeping his hand out towards the river. "I suppose that large gable-ended house down on the banks is the manor-house?" and he pointed to our house.

I listened more closely, sure that the little clerk would go off full tilt into our family history.

"Lord no, sir!" said Dick Ferguson, with an indignation I thoroughly understood. "The manor-house is on the other side; the Dormers are the lords of the manor, a very old family. *That*, sir, is Stone Heath Grange."

"Ah! then the old family have not got it, I take it?"

He was keen, then, this stranger; he had gathered that from Dick's tone which dealt a backhanded blow at the Grange.

"You are right, sir," he said, regretfully. "A woman, sir, did all the mischief; the women always do."

The stranger laughed a rich, soft, amused laugh, that I thought I should know again.

"Why, how was that, friend? The women, I salute them," and he raised his hand, as if to lift his hat, but dropped it again, "but they are certainly at the bottom of most mischief."

"Well, sir, one was there. The real old family, you see, sir, was called St. Leger, but it must needs go and end in a daughter—"

"'Dombey and Son' was a daughter, after all?" put in the rider.

"Exactly, sir, a daughter, an heiress, Miss Catherine St. Leger, and she must needs go and marry a foreigner, a refugee, handsome, certainly, and a gentleman of old family. He was a German, and they called him Dr. Von Wolfgang, though why 'doctor' I don't know. They left only one child, sir, a boy, the father of the present owner, and a precious wild scamp was St. Leger Von Wolfgang."

"Then he took the old name?"

"Yes, sir, oh yes, he had to; it was in the last Mr. St. Leger's will."

"And who did this wild scamp marry?" asked the stranger.

I felt for a moment inclined to jump up and ask him what the devil he meant by asking questions, but I saw that he was only drawing Dick on.

"Marry, sir? why, a beauty and a baronet's widow. Do you know the name of Falconbridge?"

"I cannot say I do."

"Well, no matter; only the present baronet is her son, only child by her first marriage. I don't know exactly who she was, but I have heard that her mother was a creole lady. Anyway, Mrs. Von Wolfgang—"

"She dropped her title, then?"

"Oh yes, sir. Well, her name is not English, nor yet French; they tell me it's a French creole name—Georgine. She has one son, the present owner, who is his brother's ward."

"Is he under age, then?"

"Yes, sir; only sixteen, a handsome lad, like his grandfather the doctor."

"And what is his name?"

"An outlandish one enough, sir—Casper."

"Casper Von Wolfgang." He repeated my name slowly, as if weighing it letter by letter. "A thorough German name; pretty, too, and unusual. Which name do you mostly give them about here?"

"Well, sir, of course their own class give them their full style, but the rest popularly, as one may say (specially those who remember the old family), generally call 'em simply Wolfgang. The St. Legers were liked, you see, sir."

"And these Wolfgangs are not, eh?"

"I don't mean, sir, that they are personally disliked. Certainly Mr. Casper isn't, for he's handsome and kind-spoken." ("Thank you, Dick," muttered I.) "But his mother is haughty, very haughty; got a temper, too."

The stranger laughed.

"Is that why they are not favorites?"

"No, sir, no; but, you see, the St. Legers were county gentry, and lived here, spent their money here, subscribed to the county hounds, took interest in everything; now, these Wolfgangs don't, and never did. They are London people, care naught about Stone Heath, and are seldom here, except for a little while in the autumn or spring. It isn't possible we should like them so well; and, besides, there is something queer about them—they have never once been seen in church. For the lad I don't wonder, but Mrs. Von Wolfgang—"

"Is she a Roman Catholic, or maybe a Dissenter?"

"Neither, sir; she never enters church or chapel of any kind, and won't even visit the rector. I call it shocking, quite unorthodox."

"Quite shocking!" said the stranger, gravely, but my ear detected

a vein of irony in his soft voice. "The rector should reclaim this wandering sheep."

Dick was puzzled, I know. He could not make out this strange rider at all, still he chattered on from where he had stopped.

"And the more's the pity, sir, that only this very day she's got come to her a little niece or relation to live with her, I fancy. Poor child! such a beauty, too."

"A beauty, eh? Do you know her age and name?" asked the tall rider, laughingly.

"She seemed to me about seven or eight, sir, and her name—let's see, I heard it, a rather odd one—Miss—yes—Miss Nina Lennox—"

"Is she Scottish, then?"

"I believe not, sir; only by descent, perhaps, but—"

I did not wait for more. I was seized with a desire to see nearer, perhaps speak to the stranger; and crawling along behind the bushes, I rose up at a little distance and came lounging along the high-road, or rather the foot-path by the side of it, stepping as softly as I could. But the strange rider had a keen ear, and lightly as I trod the turf, he heard me, for he turned his head sharply, and immediately lifting his right hand, drew his broad hat lower, and flung his heavy cloak in unconsciously graceful folds across him. As he did so the sun flashed on a gleaming gem on his finger, and threw off so dazzling a ray that for the moment it blinded me.

Dick Ferguson saluted me.

"Good-morning, Mr. Casper; glad to see you. Maybe you can tell this gentleman the distance to London?"

("Well done, Dick," thought I; "I'll step as far as the church porch to please your orthodoxy.")

I turned, and looked up. My light cap left my face bare enough, and under the shelter of his Calabrian hat the strange rider was studying it, printing off every line, every shade, on his own mind; not rudely or obtrusively, but quietly, in the most natural way, as only waiting for my answer. I know not why, but I felt uneasy, fretted, determined to say something about it, though I answered him first.

"It isn't over twenty miles; an easy ride I call it, and pretty too."

As I spoke a restless movement of his spirited horse drew my glance to the firm hand that instantly checked it. I had not been mistaken. It was a delicately beautiful hand, perfectly made, and how nervous, how firm and strong; better to grasp in friendship than feel its grip in enmity; if I could have foreseen then!

"A thousand thanks," he said, with courtly grace. "I shall take it in preference to the rail. You have a quaint old town back there, and this lovely view. I have been looking at it."

"And at me too," I broke in, with a boy's *brusquerie* that must have betrayed my annoyance. "You'll know me again."

"Which is more than you will me, *mon ami*," said the stranger, with a soft laugh, that struck my ear with a curious dare-devil ring.

"Sha'n't I? No, not perhaps your face and figure in another

dress or after years, but I think I shall know this anywhere," and I touched his bridle hand—the right was under his cloak.

He laughed again, amusedly, incredulously.

"Not you, *giovannaccio mio*, it's not your trade; you would never be able to swear to my hand."

"I shall!" I answered, impetuously. "I shall know it, and your voice and accent."

"Not one of the three, unless I choose it; but I shall know you. Good-day, friend," bowing to Dick. "*Au revoir*, M. Casper St. Leger Von Wolfgang—adieu."

"*Allez au diable!*" I called angrily after him as he rode away, and he heard, for he turned in his saddle to kiss the chiselled hand I declared I should know, and his laugh came back to me on the wind. The next minute the strange rider disappeared over the brow of the hill.

I heard that laugh in my ears long afterwards. I hear it now.

MANUSCRIPT III.

NINA LENNOX.

I DID not wait, or give Dick any time for any remarks on the stranger, for I turned directly, jumped over the bushes and bounded away home, in a very irritated state of mind. How that man's words and tone rankled:

"Not you, *giovannaccio mio*, it's not your trade; you would never be able to swear to my hand."

And why not, I wonder? it was a very marked hand. Not my trade! Was it his, then? Who, what was he? a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world? Whatever his nationality, English, French, and Italian seemed to have come with equal facility to his tongue; but beyond that conjecture fell, baffled. I had crossed the path of an enigma.

In a moody humor I went into the house and made my way towards the drawing-room. As I entered the corridor I heard my mother's voice through the open drawing-room door; and then a child's voice, exquisitely sweet and flexible, said,

"This picture is like you, Aunt Georgine. Is it your son?"

"Yes; look at it, Nina."

I advanced on tiptoe to the door, and for the second time that day looked and listened unseen. Before my own recently finished portrait stood my mother and a child.

Looking back, I recall that picture as vividly as I saw it then, the spacious room forming a background of white and crimson; the wide lofty windows admitting a broad sweep of light, glowing with the rich coloring of the red autumn sunset, while the last bright rays of the sun fell full on the half creole-looking woman and the golden-haired child.

Georgine Von Wolfgang (it would weary the ear to always or often call her "my mother") was, in truth, somewhere about forty; but she looked, as women of her type often will, fully ten years younger. No lines yet on the smooth face, no gray visible among the thick brown hair, dark almost to blackness. She was handsome, and knew it. I have heard her called a superb woman, and it was exactly the word. Not that she was queenly, or much over the medium height, but she had a well-set head and fine form, and she carried them well, and she had very fine eyes and clear rich complexion, inherited from her French creole mother. Haughty, passionate, impetuous she certainly was, capable of tornado-like storms of passion, and unforgiving implacable hatreds, with a leaven of hardness in her that showed in her face there was little there of that which makes softness and faith. She was worldly, a sceptic, loved pleasure and ease, she loved herself, she loved me much, and my half-brother Walter a little. I do not think she cared for much else. That was *my mother*.

"A superb woman, that Mrs. St. Leger Von Wolfgang," said the world.

Her hand rested on the child's shoulder, half hidden by the masses of golden hair which fell over it in heavy waves rather than actual curls.

How shall I describe Nina Lennox? the slight, fragile form, which nothing could have robbed of its supple grace; the small noble head, so perfectly formed, so faultlessly balanced, that the eye only marked the perfect whole; the intellectual imaginative brow, and large, thoughtful, dark eyes, like the deep fathomless sea; the finely cut and delicately classic features, and rich glittering hair, made her a picture indeed of living beauty; a beautiful child, and, one day, to be a most beautiful woman.

My mother spoke again.

"Yes, that is my son, your cousin Casper. What do you think of him?"

"Is this portrait like him?"

"Very, my dear; exact."

"Then he is handsome, and he is very like you, too—just like you, only— Aunt, how old is Casper?"

"Sixteen."

"And you?"

Georgine laughed.

"Don't you know that it's rude to ask a lady her age?"

"Yes, I know—old ladies, but—"

"How old am I, then?"

"You, aunt? oh, not old at all. You don't look older than my French *bonne*, who is thirty."

"Thanks, pretty one, for the compliment. I am eleven years older than that."

"Then you are forty-one. Is Casper your only child?"

"No; I have another, who is married."

"What is his name?"

"Walter Falconbridge—Sir Walter Falconbridge."

"Why isn't his name Wolfgang?"

"Because he is my son by my first husband, my dear, and his name was Falconbridge."

"Oh; is he my cousin too?"

"Walter? certainly."

"Then I should like to see him. What is his wife's name?"

"Theodora."

"Is it? that is mine too. Mrs. Bury said it was a Greek name, and she told me what it means."

"What does it mean?" asked my mother, caressingly.

Nina looked up, a quiet reverence on her brow, and in the music of her sweet soft voice, said,

"God's Gift."

The caressing hand dropped suddenly, and Georgine drew back as if an asp had stung her. Then she broke into a derisive laugh.

"Oh, indeed! child, don't talk such nonsense to me. God? Bah!"

I saw that child shiver, and her large dark eyes open wide in startled wonder; but she said nothing, only moved away to the window, while Georgine threw herself on a sofa.

In a little while the child turned, with a half weary, half impatient sigh.

"Aunt Georgine, the sun has set. I wish your son Casper would come in; I want to see him."

How pretty my name sounded on her lips. I withdrew a few steps, and then walked into the room.

"Ah, mother, so you have got your little niece in my absence," said I, advancing to the bow-window. "Miss Nina Lennox, I hope we shall be good friends," and bowing low, I held out my hand.

She lifted her observant blue eyes, and gave me a long, steadfast look that I could hardly bear, it was so keen and searching, and suffered me to take her little soft hand and kiss her. Mark! suffered me. She did not give the hand or offer the kiss, but she said, "Then you are my cousin, Casper Von Wolfgang. I am glad you have come in."

"Thank you, pretty one. I suppose you wanted a game of romps?"

"No, I wanted to see what you were like."

She delighted, amused, charmed me inexpressibly. I smiled, then laughed out.

"You quaint, original child; well, what do you think of me?" said I, sitting down and drawing her to me.

She did not answer at once, but moved her hand from button to button of my coat, up, up to—yes, to my dainty, elegantly fastened tie, over which I spent full fifteen minutes every morning; and I suffered it!—ye gods, I actually let those tiny, delicate fingers touch it, softly feeling the fine silk texture.

"Well, Nina, are we to be friends or enemies?"

Again that keen look, very wistful this time.

"I don't know; friends, I suppose. I think I shall like you, only—"

Only what? I would have given worlds to fathom that child's mind, to reach her *arrière pensée*, but it was vague to herself, impossible to get from her in words, and I dropped it.

"Oh, Nina, look, you wicked monkey; my dainty tie!"

For the delicate restless fingers had fairly untied it.

For a moment she looked scared, and then broke into a rich gleeful laugh, full of innocent mischief.

"Oh, I have spoiled it! let me tie it again. I'll do it beautifully."

"Right away, then!" said I, making merry anger over it. "You are as mischievous as a colt, or my pointer puppy."

"Have you got a horse and puppies?" said Nina, swiftly and deftly tying it again.

"Oh yes, round by the stable-yard; puppies as big as a young donkey."

"Puppies are never so big," said she, shaking her golden hair at me. "There, I've done this beautifully; see, aunt. Casper, look in that pier-glass—"

"Really, Nina, you are a fairy. I am enchanted. It is superb; actually as well as I do it."

"Better, you mean. But, now," said she, coolly, and putting her hand in mine with a child's fascinating assurance, "take me to see your horse and puppies."

"Why, child," said my mother, "you and Cas must be hungry. Tea is coming."

(We had dined early, for Georgine to go and fetch Nina from London.)

"No, we're not, aunt; I want to go out first, or it will be too dark. Come, Casper."

"Casper," laughed my mother, "you must strike your colors to this spoiled little empress."

"I have done so already, mother. 'A wilfu' woman,' you know." Nina stopped on the threshold.

"Do you know what Mrs. Bury says is that proverb?—'A wilfu' woman maun hae her way, but a wilfu' mon's the very de'il.'"

"I sing small," said I, jumping through the window on to the terrace, and she followed me, laughing joyously.

We soon gained the gate to the stable-yard and kennels. I paused.

"Now, Nina, ain't you afraid? there is a large fierce mastiff to begin with—"

"He won't hurt me; dogs never do. He'd let me put my arm round his neck if I coax him. Open it," pushing impatiently at the door.

"Tiger is loose, I tell you."

"I don't care, I'll call him. Tiger! Tiger!"

I had never known Tiger do anything but bark at a strange voice; but now, instead, there was a questioning, uneasy whine inside the door.

"Come, then; take my hand."

"No; I'm not afraid. I'll go in before you."

"You daren't, little boaster."

She flushed.

"But I dare. Open that door."

I did it, fully expecting her to retreat in terror to me from the huge mastiff within; but I never was more mistaken. Stepping boldly before me, she passed in first. Tiger came up directly, growling ominously, and pawing and smelling round her in a way that might have alarmed a grown man.

Not so this pure little child.

"You great beauty! you noble, dear old Tiger. Good boy; nice old fellow."

There she was in a minute on her knees before him, stroking his nose, his ears, his great paws; the next moment she had his huge head on her shoulder, and her arms round his neck.

"Casper, look! see what friends we are—Tiger and I."

So they were. Tiger only drew his head away to lick her hands, her arms, her very face, letting her play him a hundred tricks, tying his ears, taking up his paw, even pull his tail, to my utter surprise; and when we moved on, he kept at her side, looking up in her face, and fussing round her for notice, as he had never done to any one before.

She was delighted, stopped to hug him, and gave him her hand, which he carried gently in his mouth as he walked at her side. Many a rough romp has she had with Tiger, many the time he has rolled her over, making believe to bite; but huge and rough as he was, he never so much as bruised her, never even scratched her, or left the marks of his teeth on her flesh. She used to wander out alone, but if we knew that Tiger was with her, we were never anxious; and though she petted and liked the other dogs, great rough Tiger was her first love and her last.

"I shall call you Una," said I, laughing.

"Why? who was Una?"

"Una is the heroine of a poem which I will give you some day. She was the faerie queene, and tamed a lion."

"And I have tamed a tiger," said the child, laughing merrily.

"Una is a pretty name. Where are your puppies?"

"Here is one." I whistled, and from an inner yard—the kennel-yard—came bouncing up my favorite, Don, a handsome young pointer of a year old, brown from head to foot, not a white spot on him. Always over-friendly with strangers, he jumped boisterously on Nina; and being large and strong, the violent onslaught made her stagger. I almost expected a cry, but instead she fairly hugged the dog with a burst of delight.

"Oh, you dear dog! He likes me, too. Don, down, sir; you bite too hard." For Don had got her arm in his mouth playfully and left marks on it, and she administered a slap to his brown face, at which he pranced. I laughed, and led the way to where there was a litter of real puppies, which the groom, who had the charge of them, had just fed.

In a minute Nina was seated on the ground, and had them all in her lap running over her, alternately playing with and teasing them, seven in all—three water-spaniels, two pointers, and two curly, perfectly black retrievers.

“All pups together, sir,” said the groom, highly amused. “Wouldn’t missy like one o’ them little ’uns?”

“I don’t like little dogs,” said she, putting the retrievers on Tiger’s back and a spaniel on his head, and then she broke into peals of laughter at their futile endeavors to get down.

“Oh, do look! how funny they look! And isn’t old Tiger good?”

“Lord, miss,” said Baylis, when he could speak for laughing, “it’s all along of you. I never thought to see Tiger letting them pups be put on him; but dogs is so fond o’ children, and, bless her pretty face, sir, ’tain’t no wonder as he takes to her. Missy, wouldn’t you like to see the hosses?”

“Oh yes, please; are there many?”

The puppies were put down, and she was on her feet again.

Back again to the stable-yard, and Baylis showed her the horses.

“What big gray horses, Casper,” she said.

“Those are for the carriage, ‘fayre Una!’ ”

“You *will* call me Una, then. And those pretty white ponies?”

“They are for the phaeton.”

“And those two brown horses?”

“Mine and mother’s, for riding.”

“But there is an empty stall.”

“I think, Nina, that we must fill it with a little riding-horse for ‘fayre Una.’ ”

She looked up, her blue eyes dancing, her cheek flushing.

“Will you, *will* you really, Casper? and let me ride with you.”

“Yes, really; and to-morrow I’ll show you the boat-house, and take you on the river. Come in now; see, it is dark, and mother is waiting for us.”

Dear little winsome thing! when she came to bid me “good-night” she laid her soft face against mine, and whispered a little tremulously, “I was naughty to you when I came; I do like you, I do like you very much.”

Oh, Nina, Nina! Theodora, God’s gift, indeed! If I had only known— There, hush, hush! what am I writing?

When she was gone, I asked my mother about Nina’s history, for till then I had really hardly known, and cared still less, for her existence, nor had my mother, and she could only give me an outline.

Georgine’s only brother, Theodore Lennox, had gone to Calcutta when very young, and there married a lady, who died in giving birth to Nina. At three years old she was sent to England, but not being very good friends with Georgine since her second marriage, Colonel Lennox sent her to a Mrs. Bury, who took Indian children. He died himself two years after, suddenly, leaving no will, and only two thousand pounds which were in the English funds in Mrs. Bury’s name, for the use of the child. Mrs. Bury seemed to have been a faithful guardian, but lately her health had failed her, and she was

going to Madeira, of course giving up her pupils. So she wrote to Mrs. Von Wolfgang, as Nina's nearest relative and only legal guardian, and my mother at once adopted the child.

So this is how our house became the home of Nina Theodora Lennox.

MANUSCRIPT IV.

A BOAT-RACE.

IF I linger over this period, I may surely be pardoned. I was young then, and happy—and innocent then as I never was in after-years.

I had not been used to care for children—generally speaking, lads of sixteen do not, though I have known many exceptions—but this child charmed, fascinated me. Her pretty ways, her vivid imagination, her intellect—I am not misapplying the word—more than all, something deep and fathomless about her drew me irresistibly to her, and made me her slave. I am sure any other child would have been hopelessly spoiled, for even my mother felt something of her charm, but she was not harmed.

The moment breakfast was over next morning she came round to me, coaxing in a way that nothing male could resist.

“Won't you take me to the river now—in the boat?”

Georgine looked up deprecatingly.

“My dear Casper, she'll be afraid; take Elise.”

Elise was her French *bonne*, who had been with her from her birth, having been Mrs. Lennox's maid, and my mother had wisely retained her in her service.

“Oh, Aunt Georgine, we don't want Elise; I'm going for my hat, Casper, so get yours.”

“Mother, she is as imperious as you,” laughed I, as she vanished. Georgine bent her dark arched brows.

“Very pretty as a child, but take care, Casper, how you encourage that will of hers: two cannot play that game in one house.”

“How you go ahead, mother. She—”

“Hush!”

Nina came bounding in, followed by the *bonne*, with something over her arm.

“Madame, l'enfant est méchante; she will not take this mantle—Ma'amselle.” She held it out, half laughing herself. “M. Casper, please make her.” But mademoiselle danced round me, laughing wickedly.

“Non, non!” she cried in French. “I will not take it, I tell you. M. Casper, follow me.” And with a bound she vanished through the window. I followed directly, in time to see her vanishing in the direction of the stables; and when I caught her there she was, with the finest of the spaniel pups on her shoulder, biting her golden curls.

"I am going to take him, Casper. Come along, and keep your nose down, sir."

This last was to the puppy, which she held in her arms.

I could not deny her, and so led the way to the boat-house, of which I had a key. I got out the small boat, built to hold one rower and one or two sitters. Nina watched me, in her grave, observant way, while I placed the stretcher, put in boat-hook and sculls, greased the rowlocks, and finally shipped the rudder, and laid the tiller-ropes, covered with blue silk, ready. But when I offered to lift her in she laughed, swerved aside, and jumped in.

"There, puppy, you sit at my feet," said she, sitting down and taking up the ropes. "I'm going to steer."

"You? Fayre Una doesn't know how."

"Yes, she does, M. Casper. Mrs. Bury's brother taught me. He used to take me often on the *Serpentine*."

"Those tiny hands haven't the strength," said I, incredulously, as I shipped my sculls and pulled out into the stream. "Holloa! what the deuce is the boat about!"

My exclamation was elicited by her head suddenly slewing sharply to port, and I was answered by a peal of laughter.

"*Now* are my hands strong enough?" said Nina, with such intense mischievous glee that in my laughter I nearly caught a crab.

"Oh, Nina, you'll kill me! I yield, I cave in!"

"You had better; there, now, we are all right again. Puppy was horrified at you—"

"Keep your lookout, Captain Lennox, and don't chatter."

"I am doing both." And certainly the large observant eyes were keeping a very bright lookout ahead, and there was no question about the other. "Casper, how old is puppy?"

"Nearly four months, I think."

"Then it is time he was named. What shall we call him?"

"Call him? Let's see; Lovel. Have you read Mrs. Markham's 'England'—"

"The cat, the rat, and Lovel the dog,
Rule all England under the hog?"

"Yes, I remember; but Lovel is ugly."

"Neptune—he was the ocean-god."

"Neptune is common."

"Captain, you are 'uncertain, coy, and hard to please.'"

She laughed at my new sobriquet, by which, *en passant*, I often called her. "What will suit you—Jasper?"

"No, that will rhyme with Casper. I shall call him Colin, and his master's surname will do for him."

"Or his mistress's. I think you must have him, captain. Colin Lennox sounds well."

"Have him—for my own?"

"Yes, blue-eyes, for your own; only Baylis must keep him in the stable-yard till he is six or seven months old."

"You are very kind, Casper."

She sat silent for some time, steering really capitally. At last she said,

"We are going down-stream, are we not, Casper?"

"Yes, London way."

"I want to go faster; give way. More still; lay out well."

"Mind your helm there, captain;" but I threw a glance ahead myself now and then, but in a little while she stopped me.

"Lay on your oars, Casper; do you see astern?"

"Yes, a lovely view, Una; what else?"

"There is a boat coming on, with one man in it; let's wait till he is close, and then race."

I looked. We were hugging the left bank, the stranger the right; and I watched him admiringly as he came easily on, but pulling the true, long, steady "Oxford" stroke, that sent the boat on as if it were a toy. It was beautiful.

The river lay wide between us; but as he drew nearly opposite, I thought that I had seen that broad Calabrian hat before. I felt almost sure; yet, "No," I muttered, "surely no foreigner ever pulled that long, strong, English stroke." My doubts were soon ended, for as he became our *vis-à-vis* that wicked Nina stood right up and shouted,

"Boat ahoy! we're going to race you!"

The stranger lay on his oars directly, and turned his head. How I wished that hat was in the river. The next moment he waved something white in his hand, and called across—not loud, but every word came distinctly,

"Ah, bonjour, petite! M. Von Wolfgang, je suis très charmé de vous revoir."

I was right; it *was* him, then—the strange rider.

"Does he know you, Cas?"

"Only my name," said I, indignantly. "I *will* race him now," and I shouted back, "I'm sorry I can't return the compliment. I'll outrace you, and chance the ducks—neck or nothing."

He leaned forward over his sculls, laughing, I am sure; then he answered, in his soft voice and deliberate English, never clipping words, as we do,

"It would not be fair play. I am a bearded man, and you are a lad."

A lad, indeed! I would beat him now, a tall, slight whipper-snapper! A foreigner have the impudence to tell me, an Englishman (?), that it wasn't fair to race me on my own element. In my ire I forgot the way I had just seen him handle his boat. I had the advantage, too, for my boat was a small, light, sharp-built skiff, and my sitter was a feather-weight, while his, though a beauty certainly, and sharp at the head, was broad rather in the beam, and much larger than mine, carrying two sitters and two rowers—a pair-oar.

"Lad or not," I called, "I'm your match, and better, for my skiff is a feather."

"Very well! I will take your sitter, give you half a mile, and beat you in twenty minutes."

"The devil you will, though! I won't trust you with my sitter," said I, settling myself in my seat, and shipping my sculls. "Come, get yourself ready."

"Do you see that weeping willow a quarter of a mile ahead?"

"Yes, of course."

"*Bien!* I will wager you ten to one that I give you that start, and pass you in twenty minutes. After that I will race fair—if you demand it. Start when I throw up my handkerchief."

"Done!" I laughed scornfully. "Now, Nina, drop the ropes, and sit still," I added, pulling easily down towards the willow.

"I know; look at him."

I saw him kiss his hand to her, and then, cool as a cucumber, "light up," and lie down in his boat, resting his head on his hand, watching me, I knew. I waved my cap defiantly, and was answered only by a huge puff of blue smoke which hung lazily about him on the still atmosphere.

In a short while I reached the willow, and there, pausing ready, looked back after my antagonist. He stood up, flung aloft his kerchief, and then very leisurely seated himself and took his sculls, but he did not start till full a minute after me.

Then the race began, Nina holding my watch to mark the time. I was young, strong, and skilful, and knew better than to give out my strength too much at first; so did he, or else he was playing with me; but I confess that after a little while I felt a qualm of oppressive doubt cross me when I saw his long steady sweep; still, as yet, he was not gaining on me.

"Time, Nina?"

"Five—no, seven minutes have passed."

"We shall beat. Look how far he is."

And warm now to my work, I put forth my full strength and gave way with a will. The skiff flew, but in a few minutes Nina's pointing finger made me glance at my rival. Ye gods! how he was bending to his oars! what power and vigor there was in every long stroke! I could not disguise it from myself—he was gaining.

"Time again?"

"Ten minutes."

I pulled, and watched in silence. Those terrible strokes! he was coming up hand over hand now; every moment the distance was lessened, and that without any visibly extra exertion on his part. There was a man on the bank, and as I shot past he shouted,

"If you was a pulling for dear life, younker, t'other 'un would beat ye into next July."

"You be hanged!" returned I, with a lad's irate rudeness.

"Fifteen minutes," timed Nina; but in two minutes she pointed to the right bank, with ludicrously grim despair, saying breathlessly, "*Pull* now, Casper!"

I glanced across the river, and pulled as if indeed for very life; but I might have spared my exertions. He passed us by, shot on, and crossed our bows two hundred yards ahead, laying on his oars a moment to salute courteously—insolently, I secretly stigmatized it.

"I salute you, M. Casper. It wants two minutes yet to the twenty. Do you demand an even race?"

"You add insult to injury," answered I, with a laugh, that made a bad attempt to conceal my vexation.

"I only offer you revenge; but if you decline, *qu'importe à moi!* I will take my leave. *Au revoir, monsieur! belle petite, adieu.*"

He kissed his hand again to Nina, and pulled rapidly away down the river. I turned homeward.

"Never mind, Nina; we did our best, and anyway had a good race."

"Didn't we? Look, Cas, he's gone."

I saw the speck vanish round a bend, and it was gone.

So for the second time in my life I lost sight of the stranger.

MANUSCRIPT V.

ALLINGTON LODGE.

WITH the close of the autumn we turned our backs on Stone Heath, and went to our town-house for the winter, though, as usual, we spent Christmas-time with my brother Walter at Falconbridge Hall; and I remember how he and his young wife were more and more charmed by Nina Lennox.

I would pass over those days of youth if I could, for it pains me inexpressibly to recall them; but there is one whose path I crossed, whom it were better I had died before I saw, and of whom I must speak.

My brother Walter Falconbridge was, I have said, my guardian, though he was only seven or eight years my senior; and this Christmas it was arranged that at Easter I should go for a year or so previous to going to college, to a certain Dr. John Fantony, who kept a very select sort of collegiate academy. He took no lad under fourteen, and so famous was he for the excellence of his teaching, that it was well known that most of his pupils took good, some very high, degrees at college.

So I was to go there, and Nina was to have masters at home; but I consoled her for the loss of her playmate, by assuring her that I could see her often, as Dr. Fantony's house was within easy reach, being at a village called Allington, about five or six miles west of London. Indeed, we arranged that sometimes on a half-holiday she was to ride down with Baylis and go for a ride with me; for I was to have my horse kept at the village, as one or two of the pupils were allowed to do. This compromise in some measure consoled Fayre Una; and when Easter came and the day of departure arrived, she was very good and quiet, though after I was gone Theodora took her to spend the day with her own two children, infants of one and two years old, of whom Nina was very fond.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, I well remember, and the most lovely weather that any one could desire.

Allington Lodge—for so was Dr. Fantony's spacious dwelling called—was a large old-fashioned house of Elizabethan structure, situated within good grounds, the gates of which opened on a road skirting the wide open common in which Allington rejoiced, and which was evidently used as a play and cricket ground; for as the brougham passed along I saw a number of lads, mostly in white, playing a cricket-match. How well I remember speculating whether any of them were my future companions, and if so, which party—inside or outside? In the midst of my speculations, the carriage entered the grounds and stopped before the house. I was an old hand at schools, and with perfect *sang-froid* I followed the footman to a study, not even awed by finding myself in the presence of the master himself.

I think Dr. John Fantony was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen, and one of the most good. Old no one could have rightly called him, though he numbered fully fifty-seven or eight years, and his hair, still thick and curly, was perfectly gray. He was a tall, imposing, dignified-looking man, but with something inexpressibly soft and gracious in his manner and bearing. And what a noble countenance he had! what a fine head, and forehead! at once benevolent, intellectual, and firm, the large comprehensive powers of a grand nature. No wonder such a man turned out pupils who left their mark in the world; no wonder that those pupils idolized him while with him, and were proud to count him their friend when they started in life. Many of his younger lads were the sons of men who had themselves been his pupils years before.

Most kindly and courteously he received me, but how keenly those bright, full, blue eyes watched me—reading me, I am sure, much more closely than I then suspected.

Having ascertained that I had dined, and conversed a little, he rose and said, smiling, "There, I am keeping you talking while you are doubtless anxious to see your companions. Come, I will introduce you to those who are within reach, for you see, being half-holiday, they are all scattered. The greatest number are on the common, engaged in, or looking on at, a match between our first eleven and another school; some have gone over to the river, and the rest are out on a long walk. Shall we go to the cricketers? Of course you are a votary of that noble English game?"

"Oh yes, sir; but pray don't trouble yourself to come out on my account."

"No, lad, it is partly for you, partly for them. Why," said he, with a pleasant, genial smile as he took up his hat, "if I didn't go out to see them a bit, when the lads came in it would be, 'Dr. John, you never came out at all; oh, Dr. John, we had such a game, only you weren't there.' So we'll go to them, lest they complain that the old man did not show his face."

He spoke and evidently felt towards "his lads" as a father. I perfectly understood their affection.

We went out to the common, but before we reached the scorers'

bench, near which most were gathered, one or two perceived him, for I heard a delighted exclamation:

"Here he is! here's Dr. John!"

And "Dr. John" walked up and introduced me to the boys, many of them almost young men, who gathered about him.

"Lads," was his characteristic introduction, "I have brought you your new companion, Casper Von Wolfgang; make the best of each other that you can."

Which we did. I was absorbed at once into a number of boys, and overwhelmed with questions, which I answered truly or not, as best suited me.

"Hold hard," said I at last, "it is my turn now."

"Is it though, Mr. Wolf?" laughed a round-faced boy of fourteen; "you haven't yet told us if you're a cricketer."

"Of course I am—beat you all."

"Indeed," said another, "you'd be clever to beat some of our first eleven. Now, just watch the play a bit."

"Which is in?" said I.

"Reid's boys, second innings; we're licking them, though some of their fellows are older than most of ours; but you see, our fielding is better, and we've got one or two very crack round-hand bowlers that they can't match. D'ye twig the bowler to the right? that tall dark chap in the blood-crimson cap and belt, and white tog-gery?"

"Yes; looks about sixteen."

"Ay, but he ain't that by a year. Well, he can *bowl*, I tell you."

"So I see—swift, straight, and scientifically. What style he has! What is he? who is he?"

I was answered in chorus,

"He's a brick."

"A stunner."

"A regular slap-up cove, and no mistake."

"I'm as wise as I was before," said I, when I could put in my oar; "*who* is your Bonnet-rouge?"

There was a laugh at this sobriquet, and then one answered,

"His name is Stewart Claverhouse, and the best chap you can imagine."

"Deuced rich too," added a youth of seventeen; "his governor's dead, croaked long ago; and no loss either, for I fancy he was a horrid old stick. The doctor is Claver's guardian and grand-uncle."

"He don't look old enough for that," remarked I.

"He's sixty, and Stewart only fifteen. By George! there's a sky-er! Long-off will catch it! no—yes; well caught, Dunlop!"

There was a shout of applause as "long-off" caught the ball, and the man out came in; but he had done his duty, and was cheered by his own side. As he passed us, he said laughingly,

"I wish your captain would take off that crimson-capped bowler and put on another; you really work him too hard."

"Pray, young man," inquired one of "ours" politely, "*do* you perceive the verdant in my optical organ?"

"In yours, sir, personally, yes—in your captain's, no," answered the other, laughing.

"I say, isn't that Tom Rawcroft going in?" asked one.

"Yes, why?"

"You won't get many runs off *his* bat."

"Why not, Mister Verdant Orb?"

"He can't stand against either Claverhouse's bowling or Seymour's, and your other chap in with him is a rash runner."

The other shrugged his shoulders and turned away, while I, at least, turned my attention to the game; and a very pretty sight is a cricket-field on a fine day. But of all there I found myself almost unconsciously watching most attentively that tall dark lad, of whom they all had made so much. I was impatient for the last wicket to go down that I might see him near.

It came at last, and in his over too. The ball left his hand, and the next moment the last man's middle stump was ripped out of the ground and sent flying some yards behind the wicket, amid an irresistible cheer. Then the whole field came trooping up to rest before we went in for our second innings. I was presented to ten of the fielders, but the eleventh was not so curious, the one I wanted most of all, "Bonnet-rouge." I saw him standing by the scorers' tent, the ball still in his hand. One of the players, Seymour, saw my glance, and sung out,

"Claverhouse, come here a bit."

He came up directly.

Mr. Verdant Orb, who seemed the school-jester, and was really named Tom Dacre, played master of ceremonies.

"Gentlemen, permit me; Mr. St. Leger Von Wolfgang, direct descendant of Baron Munchausen himself—Mr. Stewart Graham Claverhouse, the first bowler in all the United Kingdom, beats all creation."

"Punch, don't be a fool," said Bonnet-rouge, shaking hands with me. "I saw you long ago. Are you a cricketer?"

"He has dubbed you Bonnet-rouge," said Punch, before I could answer, "but I guess your house never turned out a republican."

Young Claverhouse shook his head and then addressed one of the others.

Well, I had my wish. Was he as striking near as far?—yes, if for nothing but his beauty; and how the white loose dress and red belt became his tall, slight, supple figure, of which every attitude and movement was so graceful; how the crimson cap set off the silky raven-black hair that curled in thick masses over his noble, aristocratic head—an artist's head and face of the high caste which makes a Michael Angelo. What a nobly handsome man he would be—and he had no mother! What was it about him that had struck me? not an expression, strangely quiet and melancholy even when he smiled, that lay deep in the large dark eyes, and instantly made one think of the portrait of Charles I.—no, not that, not his artist-face, but his voice and intonation, and—his hand. That small, beautifully chiselled hand and slender supple wrist; that low musical voice

and graceful intonation. Surely I had heard one of which his seemed the still softer echo, and the hand too, smaller of course, even yet more perfect in its chiselling, but still like the one I had declared I should know again. Yes, there could be no mistake; Stewart Claverhouse in these two things *did* remind me of the strange rider, the man of whom I hated to think; and in that moment, like a secret subtle poison, there came stealing into my soul a dislike to this boy, the instinctive dislike one feels to something antagonistic and foreign, which the evil feels towards the good and noble, with which it has no *rapport*.

Had my spirit some darkened insight into the future? Oh that I had died then! Oh that I had died then at his feet.

MANUSCRIPT VI.

STEWART CLAVERHOUSE.

Do what I would, that boy's face and voice haunted me, and forced me, as if by some fascination, to look and listen. Do you know those rare voices that, alike in singing or speaking, you hear through any noise as you hear the softest note of music? His was such a one; and when he spoke I caught myself listening, and often trying *sotto voce* to repeat what he had said, with his accent and inflection of voice, but in vain. And even in class, my glance would wander to his face, trying to read it, to fathom the power he had of at once drawing and repelling me. Blind fool that I was! a simple secret, if I could have read it then—but I had eyes and saw not, and ears yet heard not, as it is written in that Book which I dare neither believe nor disbelieve. I remember only the morning after my arrival I found him lying on the grass, reading a small volume, and I asked him,

“What is that book you seem so interested in?”

“It is Bacon's Essays.”

“What a dry concern to read,” said I.

“Not to me. Have you ever tried it?”

“Yes, and gave it up. What part are you reading?”

“At this moment my eyes are on a very true passage—see.”

“No, read it to me. I like to hear you.”

It was a compliment which, in most lads, would have called the ready blood to the face; it would in me, but not him; no crimson tinged the clear colorless darkness of his cheek. He simply read what I asked.

“‘The Scripture saith, The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God: it is not said, The fool hath thought in his heart; so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it or be persuaded of it.’”

I *dared not* look in that face and utter the sneering denial that

was almost on my lips: it was well for me that he did not lift his eyes; he added,

"The Atheist does not live who could, I think, thoroughly convince me that in his secret soul he is an unbeliever in a Deity and a future, and I have met several scoffers, sceptics, freethinkers, abroad."

"Abroad," repeated I, eager to escape a subject I feared to discuss with him. "Have you been abroad, then?"

"Yes, more than in England, since I was old enough to remember."

"Were you born here?"

"In England? yes, in London; but I was sent abroad when I was a child of eight or nine."

"With your father?" ventured I.

"No, to school; various schools."

"How do you mean? an odd education?"

"My father had perhaps rather strange notions about education, but I don't know that they were bad."

"How laconic you are, Claverhouse. Then you have been at heaps of schools, and under heaps of masters?"

"A good many more than most boys, perhaps. I have been in Paris—"

"At a school?"

"Yes; and then at the Jesuit College at St. Omer."

"Then you are a Roman Catholic?"

Stewart smiled.

"No, and am never likely to be. I am a Churchman—Anglo-Catholic—what you would call the 'High-Church party.'"

"Were you at St. Omer long?" said I, fearing the least touch of a religious subject.

"No."

"Where did you go next?"

"Well," said Stewart, smiling, "if I am taciturn, you are curious."

"You are the strangest boy of fifteen that ever I met," said I; "but you haven't answered. Have you been in Germany?"

"Yes, a little; from St. Omer I went into Italy."

"That is vague; what city or cities?"

"I was first sent to Florence, after that to Rome, and then Milan."

"Were you long at each?"

"Yes, tolerably."

"Your father died long ago, one of them told me."

"It was a mistake; he died when I was just fourteen, rather over a year ago."

"Were you in England?"

"Yes; I had just come over as usual to spend my vacation at home."

"And then—"

"I was placed here."

"You are rich, are you not? If you had been poor, what profession would you have chosen?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I think I can name the one Nature meant you for—"

"What is that?"

"An artist of some kind — painter, sculptor, musician — I don't know which."

He lifted his great fathomless eyes for the first time, and asked a question:

"And what would you have been?"

"Me! oh something where the work was light and the returns quick. Ha, ha! not the answer you expected, eh?"

He looked at me for a minute steadily, and then answered, quietly,

"Yes it is; you hate poverty; you shuddered just now at the mere idea, and it almost follows that you dislike steady, hard work."

"Do you mean that a man who hates one must hate the other?"

"I think that generally when you find a man hates and dreads poverty, the struggle of life, it is because he is at heart idle or unstable, and hates *to work*."

"It is easy for you to talk," said I, "who need and will never do a stroke of work, mental or physical."

"Nay," he answered, gently, "you do me an injustice. I do not talk without acting. I could not live an idle life."

"That is, being rich, you will read when you like, travel when you like—in fine, be busy only when you choose. Do you call that *work*? because I don't."

"Nor do I. I call work choosing some trade, profession, or calling, and following it up."

"Which a man of fortune never does."

"Eh! what, then, do you call our M.P.'s and politicians? You cannot assert that they work only when they like."

"No, not they, certainly. But that is not like a trade or profession by which a man lives, and which no man ever takes to except to live."

"Wolfgang, most men who choose their calling for themselves choose for something else besides mere existence."

"Much you know about it at fifteen," said I.

Again he gave me one of those keen looks which I was beginning to dread, and answered, quietly,

"I have not lived even fifteen years with my eyes shut."

I could have sworn that. Those great observant eyes of his let nothing escape him.

"Well," said I, aloud, "you talk so against idleness, what are you going to do?"

"Leave this school at midsummer."

"Leave! so soon? Oh, for a public-school, you mean?"

"No, I am going back to Florence."

"To school or college?"

"Neither."

"Laconic again. Where, then?"

"Into a sculptor's studio."

"I hit the mark, then," I exclaimed; "when I saw you on the common, I said to myself, 'That chap is a born artist!' When did you first get the fancy?"

Stewart paused before he answered, and then it was with an evident effort over his reserve.

"I can hardly remember the time when I had not the intention."

"Strange! It will be laborious."

"I know that: it is laborious to toil up a lofty mountain, but when you have gained the highest—"

"Claverhouse, you are ambitious, very ambitious."

A curious smile quivered for a moment about his delicate lips, but he only said,

"And you are not—at present?"

"Not I! I certainly don't care to take up any profession for the love of either work, art, or fame. You don't understand that, eh?"

He half laughed, and rose, shaking back his coal-black hair.

"Not quite; but, then, you are—" He stopped.

"Are what? finish."

"It is nothing."

"Yes, it is. What were you going to say?"

"It was an involuntary thought, and might offend you, which I should be sorry to do."

"No, it won't," said I, impetuously. "Finish your speech; you are what?"

"As you will, then," said he, shrugging his shoulders. "I was going to say that you are young, and have plenty of time to change or develop qualities now dormant; few lads of our ages know what they possess or wish."

"You seem to know deuced well," said I, feeling much more forcibly than I liked that in every way I was before my superior.

"I know what I like, and, to a certain extent, what I am, and what I can do," he answered, quietly.

"Do you know, then, that you are very reserved and proud?"

"I believe I am."

"Are you fond of study?"

"Yes, I always was."

"I wasn't till two years ago, then I saw its value. Your education has been desultory?"

"No, you are mistaken; it has been unbroken."

"Of course, brought up so," said I. "You are a linguist?"

"Nay, I cannot lay claim to that title yet; of course, French and Italian I can speak, and I know German—but that is all."

"You are a classic; I heard Dr. John tell one—"

"Never mind what he says, he is over-partial," he interrupted quickly, and walked away.

"Proud, ambitious, and sensitive," muttered I, looking after him, "and very gifted; beyond my comprehension, too; but for all that you fascinate me against my will. Stewart Claverhouse, there will never be much love lost between us two."

No love, certainly; on my part, at any rate, for each day made me

feel more and more how completely he passed me by; but his feelings I could not read; he was so courteous to all, so utterly unselfish, so almost impossible to rouse to anger, where only he himself was concerned, that he baffled me. He joined in, nay, was often the ringleader in all our boys' manly games; but though a general favorite and friendly with nearly all, he had no chum; some, of course, he liked better than others, but he had no *friend*, no mate: there was something which none of them could pass. His slowness to take offence, and openly expressed dislike to a quarrel or fight, blinded me into misjudging him, until Seymour, a sharp fellow older than me, opened my eyes. It was a full fortnight after my arrival that I said, with a laugh,

"There seems no offending Bonnet-rouge. I don't think he cares to fight."

Seymour gave me such a look.

"I'll tell you what, Wolf, don't you try it on too far, unless you want a thrashing."

"He!" said I, scornfully, "he couldn't lick me; for though he's taller, he's a regular whipper-snapper, so slight; look at his hands."

"Don't care; for all his slightness, he's your match, and more too; he is all muscle and spring. Claverhouse is hard to rouse; but when he *is*, he is an ugly customer."

"All my eye! if he's plucky, why does he shirk a fight?"

"If!" He's as plucky as the devil, only he doesn't gas-blow. Here is a Spanish proverb, 'Beware of the silent man, and the dog that does not bark.' Stewart hates a row, partly because he thinks it ungentlemanly; but though he takes things so easy for himself, let him see injustice from the strong to the weak, and he is roused directly, and then, I tell you, against anything of his match he is a formidable foe."

"Come, come, Seymour; Clavers isn't over-strong."

"The deuce he isn't! no, not of the heavy-weight sort; you, for instance, could lift and carry a weight under which he would break down."

"Ay, and in a stand-up fight I should floor him."

"Not you; for one, he would not let you get a knock-down blow at him, he's so lithe and active and skilful. His strength is that of the Arab horse, endurance, that is, principally; but look at his make and muscle, he is too well and evenly made not to be strong physically. I'd back him against you any day, to stand fatigue, at walking, riding, rowing, or anything else."

"You would lose, then," said I, with a curling lip; "and as to the fighting—"

"Well now, look here, Wolfgang! you know Norton?"

Norton was a big, strong fellow of seventeen, one of the few that Stewart did not affect.

"Yes, what of him?"

"Norton, you will soon find out, is inclined to bully. About a month after Claverhouse came here, he, Norton I mean, was badgering a little chap of twelve in the playground, knocking him about

shamefully. Stewart turned directly and went up to him, very quiet in his manner, but still waters are deep. 'Let little Netherby alone,' he says. 'Mind your own business, and be damned, you foreign whelp,' says Norton—politely, you may believe. 'If you don't let him alone, I'll make you.' 'You! lath, you daren't touch me; I'd pound you. Stop till I've settled Netherby, and I'll polish you off, youngster, for meddling.'

"Stewart said no more, but acted. In a second he had little Netherby behind him, flung off his jacket, and with a quick 'Defend yourself,' let fly a blow that took Norton scientifically between the eyes, and made him reel, seeing more stars, I'll bet, than ever were created. Then there was a battle worth seeing. If Norton could have got a few heavy blows, or closed with him, he would have borne the lad down by sheer weight and brute strength, but Stewart's skill, serpent-like agility, and strength, too, were more than his match. There was a sharp contest, and at last suddenly Norton went down like a log, and lay there beaten. Claverhouse just glanced at him, and walked off without a word, never a taunt or a sneer, but he's never liked Norton since then, not because of the fight, but the injustice he did. Look you, Stewart is one of those that may forgive, but never forgets. I shall be sorry when he is gone, for he's a brick."

"He's a cure," said I, not at all inclined to join in his praises; "come in, there is the dinner-bell."

And yet ten minutes after, when I found myself his *vis-à-vis* at dinner, I could not keep my eyes from glancing at him, nor my ears from listening to his voice.

MANUSCRIPT VII.

A FEARFUL BÊTE NOIRE.

"O! beware, my lord, of jealousy;
It is the green-ey'd monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on."

So with bitter truth wrote Shakespeare three hundred years ago. True then, true now, true as long as the world exists and man lives. Is it a feeling or a passion, or one and both—this subtle poison that corrupts the very spring of life, and maddens brain and heart? this foul seed that, in corrupting, rots the soil in which it is sown? this hell-sent serpent that, coiled among the flowers, makes a wilderness of the fairest garden, and blasts every breath of air, every moment of time, with a deadly poison? this dark, guileful thing that creeps and winds and crawls through the world, leaving only misery to mark its trail? Is *this* the arch-fiend of which men speak? *this* the devil that tempts men on to sin and crime?

Was it this that stood ever between me and he who would have

been my better angel? It had no place in him—his soul was too grand, his faith too sublime for anything so base, least of all for this most torturing, most base of passions.

Had Stewart Claverhouse any virtue in being what he was? Had he made himself? Was it his doing or Nature's that evil seemed to pass him by almost scathless? Had he given himself that large intellect, that versatile genius and strong will and energy, or the high-wrought pride and lofty ambition that in him were virtues?

He passed me by, was my superior in everything, ay, in all that had hitherto been my cherished superiorities. In study I was not his equal by a long way; at anything that demanded mere weight or personal strength I was the superior, but at anything requiring skill and agility he was master absolutely, not by any exertion, but because he could not help it.

I had always been held a very good rider, boater, swimmer, etc., but here I found myself second at once. Where or how he had learned I know not, but he could swim as I had never done; and with an oar in his hand he was at home, a boat was as a toy in his hand; and certainly no Arab of the desert ever rode his fiery steed with more grace and perfect mastery than did this boy. He had the most magnificent black mare, an Arabian, that I ever saw; and though few but he, if any, cared to ride her, she would come to his voice and follow him like a dog. When he was mounted on Ayesha he always looked to me like an embodiment of my favorite German legends, with his dark beauty, raven hair, and the coal-black steed. There was another thing about him, too, which at times has made me start and shiver in vague nervousness—his ubiquity. He certainly had the nearest approach to that fabled power, if it is fabled, that I ever saw. I have never, save in him, seen such extreme lightness and almost serpent-like suppleness of form, or such a swift and perfectly noiseless foot-fall. He would come upon you suddenly when you had just seen him where it seemed hardly possible he could reach you so soon. Many a time when I have been in a dark room he has come in. I have neither seen nor heard him, but I have *felt* his presence. Still more marked was it when the case was reversed. Often I have gone to the library or music-room to fetch a book in the dark (for I knew where to look), when, to all appearance, sight, or hearing, it was empty, when any one else might have been there and escaped my detection, but he, no! I could feel his presence directly. I always spoke—"Claverhouse, you are here?"—to dispel the weird feeling of nervousness it gave me. I cannot describe the thrill that always quivered through me when I heard his soft, gentle voice answer out of the gloom,

"Yes, I am here."

Generally I hurried away, glad to be beyond that strange influence, but one night I paused and asked, "And what are you doing here, alone in this dark music-room?"

"Cannot you see where I am?"

"No; but your voice comes from the piano."

"You have answered yourself."

"How? Do you mean that you have been at the piano? You can't see the music."

"I have not been using any music," he answered.

"No! Can you improvise, then, like your favorite, Mendelssohn?" Stewart laughed a little, half amused.

"No; I was only amusing myself. I know so many things by heart, you know."

"Will you let me hear you, Stewart? You know how fond I am of music."

"I know, and therefore I don't think I should give you pleasure."

"Let me judge of that. I will tell you when to stop; and they won't miss us in the drawing-room. Come, be good-natured."

"As you will."

The next moment his light fingers touched the keys, bringing forth most beautiful, and to me most wonderful, modulations, with a soft, mournful melody running through every change. There was a strange, wild weirdness about it that was almost unearthly, and for me had a peculiar fascination. I stood listening, entranced, how long I know not, for I took no note of time, no heed of anything, save the music and the slight, dark form dimly discernible through the gloom. I think, too, that he had forgotten he was not alone, for presently he shut the piano abruptly and came towards me.

"Claverhouse, why did you stop and break my dream?"

"I remembered that you were here at last, and stopped lest I should weary you."

"I have not heard half enough; but, Stewart, is your music always so melancholy?"

"You give it a grand name. I don't know; if it is, I can't help it. Shall we go up to the drawing-room now?"

He left the room and I followed him; and after that I often made him play for me, sometimes his own inventions, but more often his or my favorites among the great composers. Can you understand these contradictions in me? I admired, I wondered at his genius, but while it drew me to him, at the very moment that I was availing myself of it jealous hatred of that very genius, which lifted him so far above the rest, above *me*, was slowly but surely filling my heart and soul. There must have been some terrible leaven of evil in me—I, a lad of sixteen, and yet possessed of so dark and unyouthful a passion as jealousy, and that while I could not resist the fascination.

"In his eye
There is a fastening attraction which
Fixes my fluttering gaze on his;
He awes me, yet draws me near."

So it was. I was charmed, yet hating; I sought, yet shunned. What did he think of me? I would have given much to be able to answer the question, and could not, save that I felt he read me much more than I cared to acknowledge to myself; beyond that I was in the dark. He certainly did not avoid me, but as certainly he did not seek me; he did for me anything I asked, if he could, with exactly

the same kindness and courtesy that he showed to every one, and no more; he suffered me to seek him out, and thus practically I was so often with him in the play-ground, in walking or riding, that soon we were held to be chums—not for long, though: he soon upset that belief as far as he was concerned. I overheard him and Seymour one evening, in the shrubbery.

“So, Stewart, you have at last made a chum.”

“I!” The tone was very surprised. “What do you mean? Who thinks I have made a chum?”

“All the chaps. Why, you and Wolfgang are always together—regular mates.”

I heard Stewart’s soft, musical laugh.

“Is that all? He is no more a mate of mine than you, or Dacre, or any other; it is he who seeks, not I.”

“Then you don’t like him?”

I held my breath for the answer. I should have known him better: if he had hated me, it would not have been Stewart Claverhouse to let the word pass his lips.

“How like you, Seymour, running ahead. If he were an unpleasant companion I should shake him off.”

“Jesuit!” muttered I, passionately. He might have liked or disliked me—the answer would have done equally well for either. One may find a man a most delightful companion, and yet utterly dislike *him*—his character. I was as much in the dark as before.

Seymour went on:

“You are a strange boy, Stewart; have you ever had a mate?”

There was a moment’s pause, and when Claverhouse answered, I knew, by the peculiar, quiet depth of his tone, that some deep, sorrowful memory was stirred.

“I had one long ago, when I was in Rome. He was an Italian, much older than I, and I loved that man as I have never loved human being since.”

“When you have been in Florence a short while, you are going back to Rome, are you not?”

“Yes, with my maestro.”

“Then you will see your friend?”

“I shall not even see his grave; he was murdered by banditti.”

“Oh, Stewart, forgive me! I understand your solitariness, now.”

Through the gloom I saw Stewart lay his hand on his arm, but that was answer enough, and the two moved away in silence.

A little more, and I have done with my boyhood and his.

One Saturday half-holiday Nina Lennox, attended by the groom, rode down to Allington Lodge to have a ride. My chestnut and Claverhouse’s magnificent black mare were waiting ready for us when she came up; indeed, we were standing on the steps chatting, and Nina gave a little cry of delight, as I ran down to meet her.

“You are just in time, Fairy! Dear Nina, how glad I am to see your sweet face again; and, look, here is my companion, whom I wrote to you about—Stewart Claverhouse,” I added, as he came down the steps also to her side.

How that child gazed in his face, his very eyes, for some seconds, and then, without a word, she jumped off her horse, stretched out both her hands to him, and lifted her innocent face for his kiss. A worshipper of beauty, passionately fond of children, he was, I saw, too deeply touched for words, but stooped over her in silence, as he clasped those tiny hands in his own, and kissed her eyes and lips. How I hated him in that moment, for I remembered with a fierce thrill of anger and pain how very different had been her reception of me. I had had to coax and win, and then only been suffered to take what she instantly gave this stranger.

I stepped forward quickly.

"Come, we had better mount."

"He shall lift me up, then," said Nina, rejecting my hand.

I turned to my horse, how savagely I best knew; but Stewart smiled, that beautiful winning smile of his, and lifted her to her saddle, then sprung to his own, and we cantered off; though the black mare curveted, wild for a gallop, and for some minutes she gave Stewart work enough to hold her in. I wished she had thrown him. The moment her hoofs touched the turf of the common she gave a bound that would have unseated most riders.

"I must give her head for a minute," he said, quickly, and left us like a shot.

The moment he spoke Nina started slightly.

"Casper, his voice doesn't sound quite strange; whose is it like? it reminds me of some other, and I can't think what."

"Well, when I first heard it, it struck me directly as reminding me of the voice of that foreigner who raced us on the river."

"That's it! that's it!" she said, delightedly. "Casper, isn't Stewart Claverhouse beautiful?"

"Hush, child; here he is."

And as I spoke he came up, wheeled, and took up his former place at her side.

How perfectly I remember that ride! I never saw Claverhouse come out of himself so much as he did then for that child. Silent as he was by nature, she made him talk continually, and for her he did it with evident pleasure. She made him tell her of the foreign cities he had been in; the manners, customs, and various people he had seen; a perfect sketch, in fact, of his life abroad.

"And," she asked at last, "should you like to go back, and leave all your friends and relations?"

"Yes, Nina; but I have no friends or relations, except Dr. Fantony, my grand-uncle. I am going back to Rome."

"Are you? What for?"

"I am going into a sculptor's studio."

"To be a sculptor—a great, famous sculptor?"

I laughed, but he answered, quietly:

"Yes, if I live, Nina."

"Shall you make beautiful statues?"

"I hope so—yes, I *will*."

She turned her bright face to him with a curious, wistful look.

"You will, too; keep one for me; oh, Stewart, keep one for me, please."

"I will keep the most beautiful of all for Nina Lennox."

"And bring it yourself," she added, "with your own hands?"

"Yes, if it is possible, I will."

"You have promised."

"I have promised."

He had pledged his word only for a trifle, only to a child, and I tried to believe that he would forget it; but try as I would, I knew in my secret soul that one day, it might be long years hence, he would return to fulfil that simple promise—given for a trifle, given to a child.

MANUSCRIPT VIII.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

LET me in a few words close that first page of my life. Would that it had been my last!

Midsummer came, and Stewart Claverhouse went away. I remember that morning as if it were yesterday, to the very expression with which he looked up from a drawer he was turning out as I entered his room.

"So you are really going, Claverhouse? How strange and odd Allington Lodge will be without you."

He smiled slightly, a little sadly, I thought; but only shook his curling black hair.

"We shall miss you terribly, Stewart."

"Thank you, Casper; not for long. I have been here too short a time to be missed much."

"Stewart, is there nothing you regret to leave behind you in England?"

"Nothing."

"Not one thing—not one human being?"

"Ah, sì—the doctor; God bless his dear old gray head!"

God! why was it that, instead of the accustomed sneer, the tears came into my eyes? was it some tone in his gentle voice that touched an almost hidden chord of good in me, or was it the earnest reverence and love with which he spoke?

"But you will not be very long away?" I said, presently.

"Very long—probably many years."

"Shall you never see Doctor John, then, for years?"

"I shall come over sometimes to see him."

"And you are really leaving no one but him whom you will care to see again?"

"I did not say that, Casper; there are some few whom I hope to see again—two or three."

"Any of the boys here?"

"Ay, just that. Gus Seymour, and Tom Dacre—"

"Who else?"

He suddenly raised his large dark eyes to mine.

"And one Casper Von Wolfgang; we two shall meet again, but not for years—not till we are both bearded men."

"Stewart, give me that miniature of you; there it lies in the drawer."

He took it out, hesitated, and then said, abruptly,

"Casper, you puzzle me; how can you care for this? You do not like me."

I felt my quick creole blood rush to my face. Was it true or not? Or had I, indeed, two natures—one filled with jealous hate and self-conceit, the other inexplicably drawn to him, fascinated, charmed, impelled to seek him, yet knowing that there was ever something between us that barred all friendship—something in me that made him shrink, and jarred every nerve of his sensitive nature—something in him that made me fear him? I little guessed how closely he read me, boy as he was, and it was not until years after that I knew, from his own lips, what it was in me that stood between us.

I answered, impulsively,

"I do like you! Why else have I sought you out as I have?"

He shook his head slightly, evidently puzzled; unable to solve part of the mystery, because he did not know his own powers of fascination.

"Well, here is the portrait," he said, with a curious, wistful smile.

"You are welcome to it."

He held it out, but I closed my fingers round both it and the hand that held it.

"Stewart, what made you say that we should meet again?"

"I don't know; a presentiment, something from the unseen world beyond this life."

I shuddered. I felt my flesh creep.

"Strange, weird being that you are, have you the fabled gift of second-sight from your Highland descent? You are a dreamer, fond of fabled beliefs."

"Fabled, Casper! Oh, I forgot; you have no faith or God—pover' infelice."

If I were to live a thousand years I shall never forget the deep sublime pity of his look and tone; it was such as a mourning angel might have given fallen man. I dropped his hand and turned away. My eyes were blinded with tears, and it was many minutes before I could speak, and then I dared only ask an indifferent question.

"Do you travel alone to Italy?"

"Yes."

"Stewart—Stewart," called Dr. John's melodious voice, "are you ready?"

"I am coming, Uncle Jack."

Once more he held out that slight, beautiful hand; once more I wrung it hard in my own, and so we parted for many long years.

How I missed him, everywhere and at all times—his face, his

voice, his laugh. We all felt that there was a blank not to be filled by any other.

Let me pass on quickly. For two years I remained at Dr. Fantony's, and then my brother Walter sent me to Cambridge.

There money flew; my mother never knew how wild I was—better to leave her in ignorance. No memory of her or her teaching ever arrested her son, but many a time, in the midst of the wildest revel, there would sometimes rise before me the memory of that beautiful artist-face, sculptured so perfectly by Nature's master-hand, and those deep, strange eyes, that seemed ever to see something beyond this earth, and the mocking laugh or scoffing jest would die on my lips.

Yet, with all my wildness, I managed to work, and left college with a good degree; but I would enter no profession, and passed my time, like many other young men who are handsome, wealthy, and pleasure-loving, sometimes abroad, sometimes—mostly, of course—in England, but at last I set off, in a sudden fancy, for America, and travelled about, even trying prairie life, and thus I passed three years, during which my mother and Nina were travelling in France, Italy, and Germany.

Thus passed—shall I say was frittered away?—my early manhood, and I stood, at eight-and-twenty, where and what? and where and what was that other, born, like me, to blood, wealth, and position?

Since we parted, boys at school, twelve years had passed, and I still remained, only one of the many, a unit in the crowd, an idler among the busy thousands; but *his* name, the great sculptor's, was on all men's lips. Fame had long ago laid her laurels on the brow of Stewart Claverhouse.

MANUSCRIPT IX.

AMONG THE RUINS OF THE COLOSSEUM.

My birthday! a recurrence marking the flight of time—eight-and-twenty almost wasted years, and I sat, an idle, purposeless man, among the ruins of the Colosseum, looking my farewell look on Rome, a bearded man, yet idle, purposeless, save in the pursuit of pleasure, envying others their hard-earned fame, yet without the courage or energy to boldly enter the lists and emulate them. So passing from the great, yet living, my thoughts went back to the past, and, as in a dream, reared again those stately ruins into the grand whole they had once formed, and peopled them again with the great who had lived and died more than a thousand years ago. Whence came the mind that had thus set its indelible mark in things so vast? What if, after all, the very heathen in their graceful errors had been nearer a great mysterious truth than I and the school I followed in our philosophy? No; away the thought so ab-

surd and humbling! Had we lived a thousand years later, to be less wise and enlightened than they?

I was suddenly roused to the present by a figure which stepped from behind a column and paused before me.

"Monsieur, do buy a cameo or a statuette—ah! for the love of the Madonna, signor!"

A soft plaintive voice, with a most delicate languid accent, that fell on my ear in strange harmony with all around. A fitting voice and face to rouse me from my dreams—not quite an Italian face, either, for all its exquisite classic chiselling, and silky, curling, raven hair, and the melancholy beauty of the large dark eyes, seemed to belong by right to the voice. Yet she was a child in years, not more than fourteen or fifteen, and with her beauty and the picturesque dress of a Roman peasant might have stepped out of some fair picture.

"You mix French and Italian," I said in French—for she had used both languages—"and each like a native. Are you a Roman?"

"Non, monsieur; je suis Provençale."

"Provence! the mother of beauty and romance," said I, "but yet you speak Italian so perfectly."

"Ah, yes, signor. Provence is my mother, but Italy is my balia."

"Have you been long in Italy?" I asked, very much interested in this patrician wanderer.

"More than six years, monsieur, mais voici! this gran' cameo, the signor will buy it for his bell' inamorata;" and the girl held out a very handsome brooch, with a bright smile that showed the small white teeth glistening between the crimson lips.

"What if I have no bell' inamorata, pretty one?" said I, smiling.

The child gazed wistfully in my face, then looked down and gently shook her head.

"The signor jests; some maiden surely listens for his step and watches for his smile."

"Per Bacco," I answered, lightly, "you know more than I do myself. Do you of sweet Provence pretend to the mystic and mythical lore of—"

"Thessaly" was the word, but I arrested it. How should this Transtiverina understand the allusion? To my utter surprise, the cameo-seller quietly filled in the sentence.

"—Of Thessaly of old, the signor would say; does he, then, think it all mythical? is all that is dreamy and mystic impossible?"

I started, and said,

"Have you ever read what a French writer said, 'Comme il n'y a rien d'impossible, croyons dans l'absurde?'"

Again the child gave me that wistful, searching gaze, and again the bright, sunny Southern smile showed the little white teeth.

"Je l'ai lu, but monsieur cannot think with what was probably written in irony. No man"—with a slight stress on the noun—"believes in the absurd, but, as there is nothing impossible, we may not scoff at anything simply because it is incomprehensible."

"Nothing impossible?" I repeated, interested in this strange, patrician-looking cameo-seller—"nothing impossible, caralina?"

"Nothing with God, signor," said the child, quickly; "we believe by faith what we cannot believe by understanding."

I sat down on a large stone, and said, looking out towards the Eternal City,

"That, you know, is asking a great deal of man's intellect; the mind must see or comprehend to believe implicitly."

"The *mind* may, perhaps, monsieur, sometimes; but it is the *soul* that worships and believes by faith," said the child, softly.

"You set a great store by this faith," I said, curious to see how she would answer; "what is it?"

The Provençale looked surprised and paused, but answered,

"Monsieur knows the words of il gran' San Paolo—'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.' Monsieur, without faith no man can believe, and without belief there is no salvation. And faith is so easy."

"So easy;" to her it was, but not to me. What is man's reason for if it is to be satisfied with what will satisfy a child's?

My face betrayed me, for she added, looking down,

"It is very strange monsieur will not accept things of heaven on faith, and yet he believes many earthly things by nothing else. He doubts the Book of God, and accepts most books of man unhesitatingly."

"Nay, only a few," said I, startled again despite myself; just as Stewart used sometimes to startle me.

"You accept most history," she answered, directly. "You believe that Gian' Galeazzo of Milan lived; you do not doubt that the Templars existed, or that China forms part of the world."

"The cases are not alike. History leaves palpable traces, and existing lands are their own evidence, and in what you quote there is nothing hard of belief; but in that book—"

"The Bible, signor."

"—The Bible, there is much—I am mild—that taxes belief."

"Not if monsieur reads with the eyes of faith."

"Say, rather, with the eyes of weak credulity," said I, quickly.

The child shook her head.

"Que la Vierge prie pour monsieur," said the soft, thrilling voice.

"What does he find so hard to believe?"

"Nay, I scarcely know how to define it in a few words. Many things that I cannot reconcile, many things that do not agree with each other."

"Ah, monsieur, mille pardons, but read it again under the Church's teaching; there is not then one word that disagrees with another."

"Indeed, fair theologian! Do you, then, understand the mysteries that are mysterious still to the most learned and scientific men of Germany?"

I saw the faintest shadow of a sarcastic smile cross the delicate lips of the cameo-seller at my last words, and yet there was sadness too in her voice as she said,

“No; I do not *understand* one quarter of them, but I believe every word as implicitly as I know that there is a God above those blue heavens. Mais pardon encore! Monsieur says that the Bible puzzles the most learned men of Germany. Has he never read or heard the words of Jesus—‘Thou hast hidden it from the wise and prudent, and revealed it unto babes;’ and again, ‘Except ye have faith as a little child, ye shall in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven?’”

I rose abruptly, glancing above, then around. Behind, the stately ruins of the Colosseum reared themselves in a vast amphitheatre; before me lay the once mighty city that had ruled the world for so long—Rome, majestic even in decay, still holding the faint shadow of its ancient prestige, still the home of Art, and now once again risen from its gigantic fall to be the head and capital of a new nation, strong and great in its unity, of which men may say, in the words of Virgilus,

“Terra potens armis atque ubere glebæ.”

Then I turned and looked on the Madonna-like face of the child, and somehow I dared not sneer, dared not say boldly, “I disbelieve in this God of yours, and therefore deny and refuse the very ground of your faith.”

But again her keen gaze read me.

“Monsieur is a sceptic.”

I drew a deep breath, and fenced the question. “Nay; by blood I am a son of the legendary Rhine; how, then, can I do aught but worship at the shrine of the unknown?”

“And reject the revealed,” said the girl. “The signor is, then, what is called a German sceptic—visionist for all man’s wild dreams, materialist to all the grand truths that God teaches by his book and his works.”

This half-Italian Provençale was not to be deceived, and I said, without looking at her, “But I do not exactly believe in this Deity of yours—this God.”

Her ear and eye must have caught the accustomed sneer which I had thought to conceal, for she said,

“Monsieur is more of the French than the German school—he is a scoffer.”

I made no answer; for the first time in my life, bearded man as I was, I felt something like shame.

The Provençale stood looking out towards the ancient city, and at last said, half to herself, “I wish—but he is gone from Rome just now—I wish monsieur could see and hear the great Signor Maestro.”

“You mean the sculptor, about whom the world is wild. Why do you wish it?”

“Because surely monsieur must then see that none but a God could create such as he.”

“Perhaps, if you lent me your eyes,” said I, willing to give stab

for stab, but her clear, brilliant eyes did not droop, nor her pale cheek color. My arrow missed, and I added quickly, to cover my defeat,

“You know him, then?”

How her mobile, expressive face brightened.

“Sì, ah sì, signor, I was one of his models. See,” she added, opening a compartment of her box, “here are photographs, and among them some of his statues for which I sat.”

I took the one she offered—and understood her. She was no common sculptor’s model. Exquisite indeed was the pictured group of statuary on which I-gazed, but the girl was gracefully draped, save, indeed, the shoulders and arms. Modesty herself could have wished no more.

“You are a strange creature,” I said, looking at her in wondering admiration; “it just occurs to me that—”

“Monsieur has deigned to converse with a Roman peasant, a seller of *camei* and statuettes.”

“No, mon enfant, but that a Roman cameo-seller, in the guise of a peasant, should have such knowledge and thought. You are surely not peasant born.”

I was sorry I had asked, for she turned aside a moment before she answered.

“Monsieur is right. I am born of a race of gentlemen of Provence, but my father was a Legitimist, and joined a futile conspiracy; it was discovered, and my father fled, leaving me a child of two or three years old. A lady took me with her to Italy, and educated me.” She paused again, then added, “Three years ago she went to the Madonna—ah, perdona—I mean, she died suddenly, and—me voici.”

“A cameo-seller,” said I; “a wanderer, with gentle birth and education—pauvre petite.”

“E perchè,” said the child, lifting her dark, wistful eyes to mine; “as well a cameo-seller as anything else, Signor il Tedesco.”

“What is your name, pretty one?”

“Anna-Marie de Laval, monsieur; they used to call me Fleur-de-Marie.”

“A graceful name,” I said, touching the beautiful head pityingly; “but, pardon, you are no devout Catholic?”

“Monsieur, I am Catholic.” Then, with a sudden change in every delicate feature, she said,

“And now see, here are statuettes, modelled after the works of il gran’ Maestro, and cameos of Rome and Florence; will monsieur have this brooch for the sake of his bell’ innamorata?”

“I will have it, caralina, for your sweet eyes and pleading voice,” said I, exchanging the brooch for a sovereign; “and whenever I think of Rome I shall remember the cameo-seller of the Colosseum. Adieu, Fleur-de-Marie.”

“I kiss the signor’s hand; may he live a thousand years!” She was turning away, but something of significance in her tone impelled me to say,

“Child, why *that* wish?”

She looked back, and said, with an expression I could not quite understand—half irony, half pity,

“Because for the signor after this life all is nothingness: he has no God.”

She turned away towards the city, and in the growing shadows I lost the slight form, though not the memory of her face, or—her faith. Since the day I had parted from Stewart Claverhouse I had heard no such words; and now—now it was too late. I was hardened. Believe? Tush, no! after all, I was no worse than most men. They profess beliefs which they do not believe in their hearts any more than I do—only I scoffed and avowed openly, and they wear a mask.

I left Rome that evening *en route* for England, but somehow that child's face haunted me.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH-YARD OF SAINTE AGATHE.

ALONE! a word often in our mouths with very little meaning attached to it. “Go alone for a walk,” alone all the morning, alone in a hundred other ways as passing; but alone in the world, that is a very different thing, grand in its solitude and misery. To stand among the crowd, all fighting and pushing their way, and know that of all these thousands not one has any concern with you; that there is not a living being who knows you, or cares whether you rise or fall, live or die; no one to look to or love; no one to touch you gently, or give you a kind word; a friendless, homeless wanderer—*alone*, in every sense of that word.

Yet such was Fleur-de-Marie, the Roman cameo-seller—the worse for her, poor child!—with her great beauty and education, born and bred a lady till nearly three years back, and then suddenly hurled down to the very bottom; cast utterly alone on the world, at an age too young to earn her bread in any way suitable to her birth; gifted far above the average, and perhaps prematurely matured and developed in mind by the stern necessity of her fate; tall for her years, too, looking more like sixteen than fifteen, yet with something sad and touching about her in her face and eyes that would make a strong man involuntarily touch her tenderly, and call her “child,” as if in that word she had a claim on his masculine strength and protection, as she had, God help her. Alone! what made the solitary child feel her friendlessness so bitterly and heavily this bright summer's day? Perhaps the very sunlight, so different to her own dark fate; perhaps (for our nature is made of contrasts) the very place she sat in—no longer classic Rome, from which she had wandered, but the burial-ground of a little church in legendary Heidelberg. It was a mournful place, where, perhaps, many a martyr

slept in peace; but the child had passed them by after a while, and strayed to a lonely corner, where, under an old cypress-tree, lay a tiny grave—the grave of a very little child—and there she sat down, weary and sick at heart, with her cameo-box at her feet, her face resting on her hand, and her dark eyes gazing out on the quaint old German town, of which they took in so little, for the mind was far away in fair Provence and sunny Italy, where her brightest years had been passed; and the beautiful head sunk lower, and the black eyes filled, till she suddenly covered her face with a low, passionate cry:

“Oh, Madonna mia, take me! Oh that I were dead! oh that I were dead!”

A light hand was laid gently on her shoulder, and a deep, soft voice said tenderly, in Italian,

“My child, you are too young for such a sorrowful wish.”

The child started and looked up in the dark, foreign face stooping over her—a handsome, distinguished head and face, a man to be marked out among a multitude—tall, slight, supple in form, the fine head covered with curling black hair, the dark bronzed complexion clear and colorless, every feature most delicately chiselled, but with deep lines about the stern, reckless mouth and broad brow that told of trouble and care. The large deep eyes, of the darkest hazel color, were keenly observant of everything and everybody, reading others, but themselves impenetrable. He was evidently a citizen of the world, one of those men who have pretty well knocked about everywhere, and done and seen as much in his six-and-thirty years as the less reckless, unquiet spirits go through in a lifetime as long again; not a man for whom life had gone easily or happily—far from it—and not a man, either, who did or could take all things easily, and turn aside the shafts of sorrow and care with a laugh. No; both had struck him deeply, and left their wounds. The history of his changeful life was no story of roses—in much, perhaps, his own doing; most men’s thorns are at least half their own planting, and he was probably no exception.

“My child,” he repeated, touching her with a hand that for its beauty might have served a sculptor as a model, “you are too young for such a sorrowful wish.”

The child started at his voice as one might at the echo of one we know, and looked earnestly and wistfully in the handsome face, and then came a simple plaintive answer, whose unconscious pathos touched him to the quick.

“Ah, signor, I am alone.”

The stranger sat down on the grave.

“What have you been thinking of this last half-hour, piccola?”

Her startled look said so plainly, “I thought I was alone,” that he answered as if the words had been uttered:

“I have been studying your face for a long time.”

The cameo-seller shivered, and shrunk away as if he must have found something guilty there; but he seemed to read and understand the sensitive spirit, and, stooping, he lifted a brooch.

“You have wandered here from Rome, I see, but this cameo is from Florence, the city of art.”

The Provençale's expressive face changed directly, and lighted up.

“Bell' Firenze! has the signor been there? does he love art and beauty?”

“As much as you do, *fanciulla*. I know all Italy; strange if I did not.”

“The signor is Italiano?” said the child, a little doubtfully.

He half laughed, but there was both pain and bitterness in his answer.

“Sì, caralina, if you will; Italiano as well as any other. I am a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world, belonging to any country which suits me; and at present it suits me to bear a French name—Guy Count de Cavagnac, which could at convenience easily become Guido di Cavagno—savez vous?”

“Oui, monsieur, parfaitement.”

“And you,” he added, “are Provençale.”

“Comment!” said the child, opening her large dark eyes; “how can monsieur guess my province?”

“Not so very difficult, petite, when I know every province of France, and have been watching your face for half an hour.”

“Monsieur is a great traveller?”

“Ay, I have knocked about these twenty years; you should be one, too, pretty one.”

“Moi! ah non, I am only a wanderer.” And the fine head drooped again.

“What is your name, my child?”

“Anna-Marie de Laval, monsieur; mais on m'appelle Fleur-de-Marie.”

“A name beautiful, like yourself; but, pardon, you are not born to this?”

“No, Signor il Conte.”

“It is a hard life for one so young and delicate as you; do you sell only *camei*?”

“No, signor; statuettes, too, and I often sit to artists. Sometimes, too, I go on at theatres as a super.”

“Do you always earn enough to get warmth and food?”

“No, monsieur, often not; then I sleep in a church portico, and it seems nearer the Madonna, where the buona signora went.”

“What buona signora? will you tell me your story, my child? you have already made up your mind to trust me, I see.”

“Foi de mon âme! is monsieur a magician?” said the Provençale, smiling; “but he is right. We who are at the mercy of the strong learn to use silent weapons, to read faces and voices.”

“A weapon I have used all my life,” said Guy de Cavagnac, struck by an answer so unlike a child, “and in your last words you have confirmed my judgment of you.”

“And that is—”

“The same as yours of me—you are to be trusted.”

"Trusted! Who would trust the outcast—the poor cameo-seller—a vagrant?" said the Southern, with sudden passionate bitterness. "Monsieur's mother or wife would draw their robe away, lest it should touch and contaminate them; do it with haughty pity, that wrings curses from me. 'Poor child,' les grandes dames will say, 'how can she be anything else?' I could kill them!"

"I have neither wife nor mother, and if I had they would not treat even the worst of their sex harshly. Tell me your story now, Fleur-de-Marie."

She told him simply, but with more details than she had given to Casper Von Wolfgang.

The stranger's first comment was,

"The signora ought to have left you her money."

"She did leave me part, but her relatives and her padre confessare got it all, somehow, and gave me the choice of a convent or turning out. I left them."

"Brave child, to face the world alone. You hated the convent, then?"

"I could die, but not live, in captivity," was the Provençale's answer. "I took freedom."

"And its dangers," half murmured Cavagnac.

"They are less than the other, monsieur."

"C'est vrai, mon enfant."

For some minutes both were silent, and then once more the stranger's slender hand was laid lightly on the girl's shoulder.

"Anna-Marie, what made you start when I first spoke? Did I startle you, my child?"

"No, monsieur; it was your voice—something in its tone—that reminds me of the voice of—"

"Who, caralina?"

"Il gran' Maestro."

Was it fancy, or did the firm hand, resting on her shoulder, tremble the hundredth part of an inch?

"You mean the sculptor, Stewart Claverhouse?"

"Sì, signor."

"Do you know him?"

The sweet face brightened, the soft eyes smiled.

"Yes, well. I sat to him. I was never a model to any sculptor but him."

Mark the difference. She thought no explanation necessary to him. She had given one to Casper, but this man, she felt, by her subtle woman's instinct, would not misunderstand her.

"Marie, is he not noble, beautiful?"

"Signor, he should be called 'Il Angelo,'" was the Southern's characteristic answer. "I call him so, but he only smiles."

The stranger dropped his hand, and his lip quivered as he asked,

"Where is he now? when did you see him last?"

"Two months ago, monsieur. He went to Paris, thence he meant to go to England."

"To England? to London?"

"Oui, Monsieur le Comte."

"Have you ever been there?"

"Never, monsieur, but I am on my way there. I want to see London."

"It is very lonely there for the friendless, my child."

"Qu'importe, monsieur?" said the wanderer; "all places are alike friendless to me. My dog Corsare is my only *camarade*. I shall be no more lonely in London than here."

"Not while he or I are there," muttered the stranger, in English. Then aloud he said, "And now I must go; but we shall meet again, Anna. See, give me that Florentine cameo."

He took it from her little hand, and dropped two glittering English sovereigns into her box, adding, "Where, then, is your *camarade*?"

"The signor shall see him: Olà! Corsare! amico mio!"

There was a moment's pause, and then, leaping over the graves, bounding lightly to his mistress's feet, came one of those beautiful wolf-hounds used by the Calabrian shepherds on the mountains. At the sight of the stranger the noble animal stopped and fixed on his face that look of intense, almost human, observation which we so often see in dogs of the nobler breeds.

"Eh, then, will you trust me, you magnificent Corsare?" said Cavagnac, holding out his hand.

The moment he spoke the hound pricked up his ears; then, with a pleased whine, began licking his hand all over, evidently liking the stranger's face, voice, and caresses.

"He behaved," said Guy, "as if he knew my voice, yet he cannot possibly do so."

"Pardon, monsieur; his memory of a voice he loves is no less true than mine; his ear detects the same resemblance that mine did."

Again that slight start; the stranger stooped over the dog as he said, "Explain yourself, Anna."

"Corsare was given me nearly three years ago by the maestro," said the child, quietly watching him; and as he raised himself erect again his dark eye caught hers.

"You would fain read me, petite, if you could; well, I knew him years ago, in his boyhood."

"And loved him, monsieur?"

"Child, could any one help it? have you not rightly called him Il Angelo? Listen, Anna; if you are in London before I am, as you probably will be, will you deliver a message for me?"

"I will do anything for monsieur," said the wanderer, gratefully.

He laid his hand on her shoulder, and said, in a low voice, which all his control could not make quite steady,

"Then, Anna, if you see the maestro anywhere, tell him that Guido lives."

"I will seek him out, monsieur."

"God keep thee, my child."

The child's dark eyes filled with tears, and she stooped suddenly, kissed his hand, and with an almost whispered "Au revoir, monsieur," walked quickly away, followed closely by the faithful dog.

But the stranger sunk down on the little grave, and covered his eyes with the right hand her pure lips had touched. Never before, in all his wild, reckless, changeful life, had such a kiss rested on that beautiful hand.

CHAPTER II.

MAGNA CIVITAS, MAGNA SOLITUDO.

“EASE her! Stop her!”

This monotonous chant was uttered drearily down the engine-room skylight of the river steamer. A grimy, handsome face looked up and nodded, and puffing and fussing, the *Leopard* stopped at the Temple Stairs.

“Now, then, ladies and gents, who’s for the Temple Stairs?” was shouted hoarsely above the hum and buzz of steam, as the plank was thrown across to the pier, followed by the usual rush and hurry. “Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.” Not quite, though. More than once on the way from London Bridge the handsome, hot, grimy face below had caught sight of a young, beautiful, foreign face looking down on him from above; and now, coming up the ladder for a second’s fresh air, he saw the same delicate face and slight form standing apart and alone, save for a large dog which she held by a short chain. The man touched her kindly.

“We’re at the Blackfriars Stairs, bairn. Are ye no for landing here?”

Unable to speak much English, and only able to understand it when well spoken, the man’s broad, strong Scottish accent made him utterly unintelligible to the young foreigner; but she felt the kind tone, and with her sweet, graceful smile shook her head, saying, “No understand, monsieur.”

“Eh, not speak English? Look, then, d’ye land there?” And he pointed to the pier, at the same time gently urging her to step towards the plank.

The gestures were understood directly and answered, “Non, monsieur, Waterloo Pier; merci.”

“Know what you’re about, bairn, eh? Poor thing!”

The rough hand touched her gently, the rough face smiled kindly on her, and then he disappeared down the hatchway again. But as the boat puffed and steamed and paddled fussily away, the man, glancing up, saw the shaggy head of the wolf-hound and the soft, girlish face of the stranger looking down, not at the engines, but at him.

On board there was the usual crowd that fill the up-river boat of a late spring evening. City clerks, going home after a hard day’s work; excursionists; the institutional (to coin a word) young man and his young woman, the latter in the favorite pink muslin—tumbled now—the black silk cape and pink-stringed, pink-beflowered bonnet; the herd of cockneys and milliners’ girls, with the attend-

ant counter-jumper; the tradesman, with his comfortable, ample wife and three or four shockingly healthy Harry the Eighth children; and such a child I abominate. It stares like a small porcine; it treads on your dainty patent-leather boots, and is budgeless until actually shoved. It is always stuffing with sweets. It is red-legged and red-cheeked; and if by ill-luck you say a word to it, will not be got rid of at any price. Ugh!

There was, of course, the old woman who always looks like a monthly nurse, and commits a fraud upon society when she dares to travel by anything but an omnibus, to which she by right belongs. In a train or steamboat she has not the least right. She breathes hard and asthmatically. She can never find her ticket; never get along fast enough; never in any way "look out" for herself, and therefore has no right, legally or morally, to go where every one has his own business to attend to.

Such was, for the most part, the crowd among which the Roman cameo-seller stood solitary and friendless, though not unnoticed, for her foreign appearance had drawn upon her many a rude stare and insolent remark from several. One even, set on by Polly, had asked her, smirkingly, "What she'd got to sell in that box?" The tone was unmistakably insolent, but the girl merely said, with quiet distance, "*Je ne vous comprends pas*," and turned away.

With a laugh, Mr. Counter-jumper laid his hand on the box to enforce his meaning, when a low, fierce growl from the wolf-hound made him start back in alarm, while Anna-Marie, with a contemptuous smile, caressed the faithful animal.

"He's a mind to take care of you, miss," said a man in a blue 'monkey,' and he pointed to the dog. "Won't let that fellow insult you, eh?"

The Provençale could follow his meaning, and answered with a smile and a "*Non, monsieur*."

"Is he yours?"

"*Oui, mon chien, mon camarade*."

"He is a deuced fine dog," remarked the man, stroking the hound, and Corsare acknowledged it, as a gentlemanly dog should, by licking his hand.

"Eh, sir, you know I'm praising you, then."

"He likes you," said the girl, in her pretty delicate English.

"Is he savage-tempered?"

"Oh non; gentle—*il est vrai qu'il n'aime pas ces gens là!*" and her contemptuous glance and shrug made her meaning clear enough to him.

"Eh, good dog: he's of no English breed?"

"*Plait-il, monsieur?*" said Anna-Marie, inquiringly.

"He is not English?" repeated the man, smiling.

"*Inglis? non; Italiano, Calabrian wolf-hound.*"

"He is valuable, you know; worth money," added the other, showing her a gold coin; "a rare dog here. I suppose you will sell him?"

The cameo-seller opened her dark eyes wide.

"Non, monsieur: je ne le vendrai jamais—jamais."

"Have you ever been in England before—in London?"

"A Londres? non, monsieur."

"Your friends will meet you, of course?" said the man, confidently. "Ought to, as it's growing latish."

"I have none," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"None—no friends? good Lord!" said the man; "you're a deuced sight too pretty to be alone in a city!"

The Provençale looked half surprised, half puzzled, but her answer was sad enough:

"I am used to it, monsieur."

"Now, then! Temple Pier. Who lands?" came the hoarse cry, and the man, with a hasty "Good-evening, my dear," darted away, and vanished in the crowd on the pier.

The wanderer looked wistfully after him, and then shivered as her glance fell on the dark rolling river; then she glided to the skylight once more, and looked down. There he was, moving about between the machinery, but he glanced up and nodded, and when the boat stopped at Waterloo Pier he jumped on deck.

"Here ye are, bairn, and God speed ye; the Lord will no forget ye, more won't Archie Gregor."

"Merci, and I shall never forget *you*—never," said the child, and so they parted.

Doubtless that man's little kindness, the few heart-felt words, the kind smiles, the sincere "God speed ye," went up for a memorial of him, and wiped out many a sin.

Turning with the stream, Anna de Laval presently found herself in a somewhat narrow, but bustling, crowded street—the Strand; but Corsare arrested her steps: the poor dog was hungry, and he stopped short at a baker's shop, looking up in his mistress's face with that speaking look of wistful entreaty that is so irresistible.

"Poor Corsare."

She entered the shop, spent her two last pennies in buying two penny loaves, gave one to the dog, and ate the other herself. Then the two wanderers went forth once more, but it was dark now, and the sky was heavy with threatening black clouds.

What crowds of people swept ceaselessly past her; no foreign city was like it; every one seemed in a hurry and bustle—carriages, carts, omnibuses, vehicles of all kinds, rattling along in an endless deafening noise.

At first the cameo-seller half mechanically offered her pretty foreign wares to passers-by, but her gentle "Please buy, monsieur," drew from one man a rough "Oh, go to hell, gal! the police ought to lock up such trash as you!" Another, dressed at least as a gentleman, and bustling along, told her—"Out of the way, or I'll give you in charge." While a third, who looked like a hanger-on at theatres, said, with a sneer, "You're devilish pretty, my dear, but you needn't make a cover of those toys: any one can see through a ladder."

The wanderer turned away. Insult was not new to her, nor was

the little episode which followed. A handsomely dressed woman—a Frenchwoman, evidently—passed along, glanced at her, and then, as if on second thoughts, stopped and addressed her in very vulgar French.

“Mon enfant, you are too young and pretty to be out alone at this hour. Go home, *ma chère*.”

The silky, kind manner, the handsome dress, did not for a moment deceive Anna de Laval, and she answered with cold hauteur,

“I am safe enough. I have no home or friends.”

“Pauvre enfant, ignorant of the dangers which surround you. Come with me, and I will find you a lodging.”

The Provençale bowed low.

“La pauvre enfant is so perfectly aware of the dangers that she has the ‘honor’ to wish madame a very good-evening and a safe journey.”

“A safe journey, *ma chère*! Where?”

“Au diable,” answered the cameo-seller, coolly, as she turned on her heel.

“Coquine! diablesse! maudite!”—but Anna lost the choicest epithets of the elegant shower; and perhaps there is no individual who has at command a more varied and foul vocabulary of abuse than a low, disreputable Frenchwoman.

The Provençale wandered on slowly, and found her way at last into broad Regent Street, now brilliantly lighted up, and near a shop-window she paused and looked round, utterly forlorn and weary, sick at heart, alone in that great city. The crowd swept past her—business-seekers, pleasure-seekers, sin-seekers, but not one of all those thousands whose face or voice was familiar; no place where the weary head of the stranger could be laid at rest even for one short night.

“Corsare, mon ami, it is cold and cheerless here—not like our warm South,” she whispered, talking to the hound as indeed to a friend. “We must sleep under some portico to-night and to-morrow find the maestro.”

Corsare licked her face and hand, understanding the loving voice and eyes, if not the words; and with her little hand resting on his shaggy head, the two went on again, not quite alone, not utterly friendless with that faithful companion and friend at her side. Yet even to him her right was challenged, for a policeman stopped her, demanding how she got that odd dog, too handsome for such as her to own.

“Il m’a accompagné de l’Italie,” she said, tightening her grasp on the steel chain, in itself of foreign make.

“Can’t you speak English? Bother!” He glanced round, and addressed a flashily dressed female, whom he evidently knew.

“I say, here, Miss Bessie, do tell a fellow what this Frenchy’s lingo means, will yer?”

The woman stopped, with a hard laugh.

“Well, what’s up?”

“Why, this dog ain’t hers. Young ’un, tell this lady where you got it.”

The girl's lip curled, but she repeated her answer.

"She brought it from Italy, she says. 'Tain't an English dog, either."

"Hem—no; but might be stole, for all that," said the man, suspiciously, and laid his hand on the chain. Corsare growled and showed his teeth, half crouching, as if for a spring. The man stepped back hastily. The woman laughed, but said, with a touch of womanly feeling yet left in her,

"Let the child go. The very dumb brute tells you plain enough that she's his own mistress. Good-night."

She sailed on, bobby turned on his heel, and the girl and the dog went their way,

"Baffled, weary, and dishearten'd,"

till at last, late at night, worn out, they crept under the deep, gloomy portico of a handsome mansion, and soon slept the deep sleep of the weary, the dog lying close on her dress, the girl's head resting on the dog's curling thick hair, each nestling close to the other for warmth, a perfect picture, beautiful, indeed, and very sad; the very policeman was touched, and would not see them. But at midnight he was succeeded by a comrade less merciful, younger, more officious and bullying in the discharge of his duty, and his rough voice soon roused the wanderers.

"Now, you young vagrant, get up! How dare you go a-sleepin' on a gentleman's door-steps?"

Anna-Marie rose slowly, answering, "It will not hurt him or you, *vaurien*."

"None o' your impudence, gal! You jist come along with me. I'll teach ye that the law don't let vagabones sleep in the streets. Come on."

So the poor cameo-seller was taken to the station-house, and locked up for the crime of not having a sou to pay for a lodging. "Eh bien, Corsare, it is better here than on the door-step," she said, as the cell-door closed, and soon the two slept again.

"Well, my good girl, and what have you to say to the charge?" asked Mr. Turton, the magistrate, the next morning, after hearing Jack-in-office.

"Plait-il, monsieur?"

"Cannot you speak English?"

"I can understand a little, monsieur, but not speak but very little." So the magistrate questioned her in French.

"Have you been long in London?"

"I arrived yesterday, monsieur."

"Well, the English law does not allow any one to sleep on door-steps or in the streets."

"But, monsieur, I had not a sou, not one bajocco, to get lodging."

"I cannot help that; the law must be fulfilled. As you are so young, and a stranger, I shall let you off this time, but you must not do it again."

“Merci, monsieur; and when I have no money what must I do?”

“Go to the workhouse or a refuge. Meanwhile, I shall give you a shilling out of the poor-box.”

“Monsieur, I am not a beggar,” said Anna de Laval, haughtily. “I want neither your money nor your workhouse. Monsieur, bon-jour.” And the Provençale left the court with her dog.

MANUSCRIPT X.

SOMETHING I HAD NEVER DARED TO WRITE.

BACK again in London, and welcomed back by all my acquaintance, as well as by my mother and Nina, who had themselves only just arrived from Naples. Years had not much altered Georgine—women of her type look old when they are young, and young when they are middle-aged; but Nina Lennox had changed indeed, and yet not changed: Nature had only more than fulfilled the promise of her beautiful childhood, but it was the Nina of old—now gay and laughing, now grave and thoughtful, as a saddened woman, always full of those thousand little sweet winning ways of hers; but it startled me, strangely and indefinitely, to see that the large deep-blue eyes had not lost the expression which even as a boy had so struck me, a curious look, as if the shadow of future sorrow had fallen there; it reminded me—it always had reminded me—of Stewart’s eyes, but in his it was something more unearthly, more deeply melancholy, more—shall I write it?—more doomed. What I had never dared to put in words was done for me the very first week of my return by a stranger, whose words came to my ears by chance in the street. I had stopped at a large picture-shop in Regent Street to look at some photographs. There were two other gentlemen there; one, the younger, looked like a medical student; the elder might have been a physician, certainly a professional man.

“Who the deuce is this dark man?” said the former.

“Not know *him*! Why, it is the great sculptor, Stewart Claverhouse—‘il gran’ Maestro’ they call him. I see by the *Times* that he is coming over here soon.”

“What a very handsome face it is.”

“It is far inferior to the original; it is a wonderful face, but it saddened me when I saw it.”

“Saddened—why?”

I heard the answer distinctly as the two turned away slowly.

“Because he is doomed. You may smile, but my miserable gift has never yet failed me. He will die young, and die violently; it is in his eyes.”

I turned sick and dizzy for a minute, as if I had received a blow.

“I am a fool!” I muttered, “to care for such chance words, spoken by a stranger, of a man I have not seen for twelve years, and whom I do not like.”

Vain sophistry! Like him? no, there were times when I hated the thought of him; but, for all that, time and absence had failed to loosen the wonderful power of his fascination—some subtle charm, to me wholly inexplicable, whose existence was not a fancy, but a fact.

I shuddered in a vague dread as I walked on again: something dark and horrible and ghastly seemed to have loomed up suddenly on my life. O God! if there be a God—was it on me even then?

I had not gone many yards towards the Circus when I heard a mellow voice behind me say,

“Surely an old pupil of mine?” and a hand on my shoulder wheeled me round. “Yes, it *is* Casper Von Wolfgang.”

“Dr. John Fantony!” I exclaimed, in unfeigned pleasure and surprise.

Handsome, noble old man, not changed by time, save that his hair was silvery white now: the stately figure was as erect as of yore; the blue eye as clear and bright. His seventy years were beautiful indeed.

“Yes, the old man himself,” he said, as we walked on together. “I saw you some way down, and I thought I recognized the walk as like what yours was ten years ago. What are you doing? not in any profession?”

“No, sir, none; I had no taste for any of them, you know.”

“I remember. Is Mrs. von Wolfgang well, and your little cousin?”

“Thank you, quite well; but Nina is a tall girl now—nearly nineteen,” said I, smiling.

“Dear me, yes; you all get on so fast, that one forgets; a sign of age, Casper.”

“You don’t look older, sir, than when I was with you. I suppose, if it is not an impertinent question, that you have long since given up Allington Lodge?”

“Oh yes, this six or seven years ago. My boy would have it.”

“Your boy?” I repeated, for I knew that he was a bachelor.

“Your old companion, Stewart Claverhouse; and ever since my home has been either at Ernescliffe Hall, or his house in London—a family mansion, you know, in — Square. I expect him every day from Paris, and I’ve got the house ready; even his studio is arranged, for his Italian servant arrived two days back with such of his works of art as were not already with me. You have never seen him since he left school?”

“No, sir, never; but I hope to see him now.”

“Of course you know at least some of his works?”

“Not to do so, Doctor John, would be to argue myself unknown. I have seen some of the most famous of them, and among them that most perfect ideal, ‘A Poet’s Dream.’”

“Ah, that is indeed a gem; it has not a fault, from the minutest chiselling of the broken column on the steps of which the dreamer sleeps to the lightest fold of the child’s drapery. And her face! He must have idealized his model in the halo of his own thought.”

“Partly, Doctor John, but the model was little less beautiful than

the sculpture. I came across her in Rome a fortnight ago. She is a cameo and image seller, about fifteen, and quite alone in the world."

"Poor young thing, poor child; it grieves me always to hear such things. So young and lovely! What *can* become of a girl like that?"

"Certainly, sir, no good in general; but this one is no common model. You know his beautiful life-size statue of a girl leaning on a cross?"

"Of course; the Earl of D—— has it. You mean the famous 'Fiora di Maria?'"

"Ay; this Provençale sat for that," said I.

"I should like to see her," said Dr. John. "I should very much like to see her."

"Well, sir, she is very likely to wander to London. You might see her."

"I hope I shall. Ah, here is —— Street, and I have a call to make there; so good-bye for the present, Wolfgang. I am really very glad to have met you, and so, I am sure, will my grand-nephew be to see you again."

I remembered the somewhat Jesuitical answer of Stewart years ago, and doubted this, but his last word made me ask,

"Pardon me, doctor, how is he your *grand-nephew*?"

"Why, I had a sister many years older than myself, who was married to a Colonel Egmont, and they left one daughter, Cora. She was barely eighteen when she married Graham Claverhouse, of Ernescliffe Hall. Stewart is her son."

"An only child, then?"

"Ay, yes, an only child. Once more good-bye."

"Good-bye, doctor."

We shook hands and parted company; but, strangely enough, all the way home the name of Stewart's dead mother was in my head. Cora! what a sweet name! Was he like her? was it from her he took his beauty? And I tried to picture her; but always, instead of the dark, doomed face which alone could be like the great sculptor, there rose before me, in all its golden beauty, the face of Nina Lennox.

CHAPTER III.

IL ANGELO.

"WILL monsieur tell me, is that the Dover train coming in?"

The inspector addressed turned quickly at the sound of the soft voice and very foreign English, to see a young foreigner in a picturesque dress, with a pretty mahogany box slung at her side, and holding a large dog by a chain.

"Yes, it's the Dover train," he answered, and passed on.

Anna-Marie drew back a little, and waited patiently till the train came in and discharged its living cargo, and then her eyes sought eagerly among the crowd for one form and face; but for all her

watching the wolf-hound saw him first, and gave a sudden pull, that almost overthrew his mistress's balance.

"Eh bien, mon chien, go, then, to him," she said, giving the leash out a little; but the dog, in his excitement, sprung forward, dragged the chain from her hand, and alarmed several people by dashing among them, and springing in frantic joy on a tall dark man who was walking along the platform at an easy lounge, amusingly at variance with the bustle around him.

"Corsare! where do you come from?" he said, in pleased surprise, caressing the Calabrian, and lifting the chain, just as Anna de Laval, following, quickly came up.

"Monsieur! I am happy to see you again," she said, with a quick flush of joy.

"And I, my child—my dear Anna—I little thought your sweet face would be the first to welcome me to England."

And as he put the chain back into her hand he held it for a minute in his own, and drew her aside.

"And so, caralina, you have wandered to this great busy capital, and here too. How did you stray here, my child?"

The girl looked up in the beautiful face, and smiled.

"I have been here two days, waiting for the signor."

"For me? First, how could you know when to expect me?"

"I went into a grande boutique, where I saw a picture, a photograph of the signor, and asked if they knew when you would come. They answered, 'The papers had said in a day or two;' so I came here."

"Strange child. Why?"

"Monsieur, London is so wide, that perhaps I might have lost you in it, and I had promised to give you a message."

"A message, Anna?—from whom?"

"A stranger, who met me near Heidelberg, and bade me, if I saw the Signor Maestro first, tell him—shall I say it here?"

"Yes, we are speaking Italian; tell me what—"

"His words were, 'Anna, if you see the maestro anywhere, tell him that Guido lives.'"

The sculptor looked at the child like a man in a dream, and then shook his head with a sorrowful smile.

"Some one would mock me, Anna. The Guido I loved was murdered; if not, I should have seen him years ago."

"Signor, no—listen. The man who gave me the message was dark and handsome. His hand was like that of the maestro, his voice had tones in it like the one I knew so well. Is that Il Angelo's Guido?"

"Hush, Anna, my child!"

He walked forward a little way, and presently came back to her.

"Anna, you have indeed given me a golden word. The man you saw was Guido, my friend. Is he in London?"

"I do not know, monsieur; he said he was coming, but I only arrived a week ago, and I have not seen him."

"Cara mia, did he tell you his own name?"

“Non, monsieur, only the name he calls himself—Monsieur le Comte de Cavagnac.”

“Eh bien! And now, Anna-Marie, where can I find you, if need be?”

“I lodge, monsieur, at —— Court, Edgeware Road.”

“I shall remember. Meanwhile, I want a present for my uncle’s old house-keeper.”

And he lifted the lid of her box, showing a tray of exquisite cameos—real ones—for he himself had stocked her box as a parting gift.

“The signor will deign to choose the best.”

The signor chose a large shawl-brooch, and smiling, asked the price.

“It has none for *Il Angelo*.”

But the sculptor only shook his head, and laid three sovereigns in its place, with a look which she knew of old there was no gainsaying.

“Adio, fanciulla mia.”

“A rivederlâ, Signor *Il Angelo*.”

And each went their way.

MANUSCRIPT XI.

L'INCONNU.

THE second day after my meeting with Dr. Fantony I went down to Dover to see my half-brother Walter, who was stopping there with his family before coming to town for the approaching season.

The journey down was stupid enough, unmarked by either pleasant conversation or incident; the only person I exchanged a word with called in requisition my stock of German, which was pretty good. Some little way from the station I was addressed in very pure German by a man muffled up in a large coat and cap; but, to judge by his stooping gait and gruff voice, he was not young.

Could I tell him of any good hotel? He was a stranger, he said, and hoped I would excuse him.

I told him he was welcome, and told him I was myself going to a very good one to see a friend, and I should be very happy to show him the way. He thanked me and accepted my offer, and proved an agreeable companion. We parted in the hall of ——’s hotel very good friends, and I made my way up to the apartments occupied by the Falconbridges. I would not be announced, but entered by a boudoir, and stood just within the half-open drawing-room door looking at the group within, unnoticed myself.

It was a picture.

A large fire blazed cheerily and brightly in the low grate, so brightly that it threw light and shade, though the daylight was not yet on the wane.

By a small table, bending over her drawing, sat Lady Falconbridge, Theodora, a woman a little over thirty, and one of the most lovely English matrons that I ever saw—lovely in I know not what

nameless charms, for personally few could have judged her more than very pretty; but Nina called her a sweet, pure woman, and in that, I think, touched the very key-note that tuned the loving harmony of her nature.

On the rug sat the two eldest children, of eight and ten years old, a girl and boy, listening intently to their father, who was reading aloud to them Maria Hack's "Winter Evenings;" and, though his brother says it, even this land of handsome men and women cannot show many a handsomer English gentleman than Walter Falconbridge. The group was completed and made perfect by a lovely child of four years who nestled in his arms, the better to peep at the pictures. I stood for some ten minutes looking, and then said, quietly,

"What a very pretty picture you would make."

There was a general start.

"Casper himself, by all good-luck!" exclaimed Walter, and my hand was nearly wrung off, while his wife and the children gave me an equally warm reception, little Flora transferring herself to my knees.

"And when did you arrive, old fellow? and how long can you give us here?" asked Walter.

"Have you dined, or lunched, or eaten in some way, Casper?" asked Theodora.

"Eaten? Yes, plenty, thank you. Nina tells me that you have been ruralizing here."

"Indeed we have; but we are coming up in a week or so."

"Alec, I suppose you like Dover better than London?"

"I should think so, uncle. It's so jolly here; isn't it, Amy?"

"Oh, stunning," returned the little lady, with a wicked glance at mamma.

"'Stunning,' indeed. Pussy, is that language for Miss Falconbridge?" laughed I.

"Bother the miss," returned missy, jauntily. "I like best to—what is it, papa?"

"Ask your uncle."

"Follow your own sweet will. Eh, Miss Amy?"

Little Flora, commonly called Dottie, here interposed.

"Uncle Cas, what do you think? somebody came here yesterday who knew you."

"Did he? Who was he, Dot?"

"I didn't say it was a *he*. Guess who."

"Was it a she?"

"No," said she, making a mouth, which I kissed, "it wasn't a she."

"Oh, a he, then, after all. Was he English?"

"I don't know. Was he, Alec? He didn't look English, nor speak quite like—not like you or papa."

I was really puzzled, but made a guess. "Papa's old French friend, Monsieur Gustave Distau?"

"No; he's old and plain, *very* plain; but this person was young, and oh, so beautiful!"

"It couldn't be—no, the description won't do, and papa doesn't know him—my old school-fellow, Gus Seymour?"

"No; but you're burning, uncle. He said he had been at school with you. Guess again."

I started, and looked at my brother. "She can't mean—you don't know him, Walter?"

"Well, who?"

"I had but one school-fellow who would strike the child as 'so beautiful,' and that is the sculptor, Stewart Claverhouse."

"Precisely, Mr. Casper. He landed yesterday early; spent two hours here, and went on to London."

"Where did *you* meet him?" said I, in surprise.

"Dora and I met him last autumn twelvemonth in Vienna. He has taken the children's hearts by storm. They would make me take them with him up to the train. And Miss Dottie, here, nothing would do but he must carry her every step."

"And tired him, I am afraid," said Theodora. "I am sure he isn't very strong."

"He is, or was, very muscular," said I, "and he was never ill as a boy. He had a large fund of concealed strength."

"Perhaps. But," added Lady Falconbridge in French, as she rose to ring for lights, "he is not a long-lived man."

Again that blow; that ghastly feeling of something dread and unseen to come. I was glad of the lights, and anything that turned the subject to other things.

I remained with them two days, during which, by the way, I encountered my German acquaintance twice, coming in, in his odd big cap and coat. The third morning I took leave of the Falconbridges and walked up to the station, reaching in time to pick a carriage in which was only an elderly gentleman and a very young man.

The second bell had rung when the door was opened in a most leisurely manner, and in came a tall, slight, dark man, wearing a somewhat Spanish-shaped felt hat, and with a heavy cloak cast across him in carelessly graceful folds. He was certainly a foreigner; but, save for a glance, he seemed to notice nothing, but sat by the window so shadowed and concealed by his hat and cloak that I could not see much of either his face or form, yet I felt a great desire to see his face and hear him speak. An opportunity offered before we had gone many miles, when, looking at my watch, I found that it had stopped. I addressed the stranger in French, though he certainly was not a Frenchman. "Monsieur, my watch has stopped; will you oblige me by telling me the time?"

He bowed gravely, and held out in his gloved hand a beautiful chronometer watch. I glanced at it, set my watch, and as I replaced it said in English,

"Many thanks, monsieur; I suppose this is your first visit to England?"

"No, I have been here before; I have been in most countries."

I started. Was I mistaken? Could my ear deceive me? Surely no; like

“A song from out the distance”

came that low, soft voice, and peculiar, delicate accent, altered in that it was yet more mellowed and tranquil, but still the same. If I could only hear it more, and only see his hand, I should be positive. If it *was* that man, he did not know me, evidently. How should he? Twelve years had changed me from youth to mature manhood.

I answered his remark.

“That is more than I can say. My experience, though pretty good, is not quite so wide.”

“It would be difficult to be so, Monsieur l’Anglais, since I have at least eight or ten years more than you, and was wandering while you were in the nursery. Have you just come from the Continent?”

“Yes,” said I, carelessly, to conceal my chagrin; “from Rome this time, and, by Jove! I encountered, only the day before I left, the loveliest and most patrician-looking cameo-seller that one could wish to see!”

“Eh, monsieur,” said the stranger, with a half-laugh; “and you found her, I suppose, more beautiful than any picture or dream?”

That laugh, half-mocking, half— I know not what; but it stung me as that same laugh—it *was* the same, surely—had stung me years ago.

“Oh, as to that,” I answered, with my most *blasé* air, “she was deuced pretty; but one can’t fall in love with a child of fourteen or fifteen, you know.”

“Ah, no, not at your age, perhaps,” he said, quietly; “one must have seen more of life—hard, uphill, real *life*, and—shall I say—be more seared, to thoroughly appreciate the charm and freshness of a child of that age.”

Though chafing inwardly, and angry at the power he had to chafe me, I replied,

“This girl had lost the very freshness you admire; it was destroyed.”

“Are you sure that you can judge any one in a single interview?”

Before I could answer, the old gentleman interposed,

“It is not very likely, sir, that a Roman cameo-seller would have much freshness of any sort left.”

“Nor had this one, sir,” said I. “She had lost that freshness *from* the world which this gentleman, as a man of the world, considers so fascinating. She had suffered and toiled—does still, I suppose.”

“I don’t think,” remarked the old gentleman, “that at that age children can suffer as much as a few years later; it isn’t in them—within their capabilities.”

The stranger glanced at him, and I saw his delicate lip curl slightly, and I wondered if by any chance he had ever known Anna de Laval, and was possibly thinking of her as he answered,

“Some girls there are, monsieur—a few, I grant—who at four-

teen, ay, and younger, can and do suffer as keenly and deeply as ever they will in their lives."

"Then, sir, they are not children: they have lost childhood."

"A thousand pardons—only in so far as suffering is so unnatural and foreign to extreme youth that freedom from it is the great charm and feature of childhood."

"Sir, would you call the city arab of London, the *gamin* of Paris, children?—yet, Heaven knows, they suffer! Where is their childhood?"

"The most of them, monsieur, never had any to lose. They are born of and in vice, bred to it; theirs is the brutalizing suffering of hardship and vice. They are born old, they are vicious men and women almost as soon as they can walk and talk; they learn to curse and blaspheme as creatures born children learn their mother's name, or the first simple prayer from her lips. Monsieur, you must shift your ground."

"Well, as you will. Did you ever see a child long remember its troubles or injuries? If it does, the first thing one remarks is, 'How very unchildlike!'"

"What range of age are you including?"

"Your own—up to fourteen."

"Then, monsieur, indeed you are quite mistaken, if you will pardon me for saying so, and have surely seen very little of children. Were you an only child with kind parents?"

"Yes, a mother, the best and kindest a man could have," returned the old man.

For one second the stranger paused, I thought, as if touched and pained by an answer that perhaps stirred a hundred sad and bitter memories. Then he said,

"Then you never felt, and, from your argument, never saw, a child suffer; above all, suffer injustice which morally murders it. Injustice is what a child never forgets, and very rarely forgives, and it teaches it, as nothing else will teach it, what youth should never know—to hate fiercely."

"Perhaps you are right. And, speaking of little people, there is another thing, sir, about children (that is striking, I mean), their very true instinct of physiognomy—nothing can deceive it—or very little, certainly."

"Quite true, monsieur. I rarely trust a man whom children and dogs dislike."

"Nor I. Women, too, have that fine instinct more than men."

"They have; but," he added, half laughing, "it is a womanish quality which I possess to an extent that often astonishes myself. I have come across so many people in my life to whom I have taken that invincible suspicious dislike, and I have never yet found myself at fault. It is a curious faculty, impossible to define or reason upon."

As he spoke, the train, which had been slackening speed, stopped at a station, and the old gentleman and his young friend got out, leaving me and the Italian—for such I judged him—alone in the carriage.

I was looking out of the window as the train again moved on, but as I was drawing in my head the sunlight struck on something opposite me, and threw a dazzling ray in my eyes, completely blinding me for a second—only a second, and then I saw that the foreigner's felt hat lay beside him, that his heavy mantle was thrown off his shoulder, and that his right hand, ungloved, rested on the door, while the gleaming gem in the signet-ring on his third finger at once showed me what had dazzled my vision.

That beautiful, slender hand—could I mistake it? No, my memory had not, did not, fail me. I had said I should know his voice and hand again at any distance of time, and I had; ay, and recognized him, too, although he had dared me to do so: it was the strange rider. What a handsome man he was! too marked, too *distingué*, to be passed by or forgotten when once seen; but his had been no easy or happy life, I felt sure—a wild youth, a reckless, anxious, ever-restless manhood had left their traces; his six or seven and thirty years had been no child's-play.

"He certainly doesn't recognize me," thought I, triumphantly; but aloud, I remarked, cursorily,

"Our fellow-travellers have very soon deserted us."

"Qu'importe? two are good company," and I felt that the large, brilliant dark eyes were fixed on me. "We probably shall not part so soon, as I presume that Monsieur Casper Von Wolfgang is returning to London."

I started—I felt thoroughly "sold"—aghast.

"What! you do know me, then?"

"Of course," said he, coolly; "I told you I should, and I have proved my words no boast. Yours were—"

"Excuse me," said I, hotly—for I was thoroughly vexed—"we are quits. Your face I see for the first time, but I asserted that I should know your voice and hand again—"

"And you did not—"

"Pardon me if I contradict you, but I did; to-day the moment you spoke I recognized your voice and accent, and your hand, too, as soon as you dropped your mantle."

"Ay, Monsieur Von Wolfgang, but you did not recognize me or my voice two days ago, when you came down here."

"Two days ago, when I came down here?" I repeated, in utter astonishment.

He laughed, that half-amused, half-mocking laugh which had rung in my ears twelve years ago.

"Has monsieur forgotten his German acquaintance, whom he so courteously escorted to his hotel?"

"No; he was an old man with a gruff voice."

"Do you call six-and-thirty old?"

I looked at him. Was this slight, handsome, soft-voiced man really the gruff old German?

"Are you jesting?"

"No. I saw you get out of the train and enter the refreshment-room. I instantly resolved to test your boasted memory against my

words, that unless I chose it you would not know me. I easily got a disguise at a neighboring *mont-de-piété*, and when you came out of the station followed you. You know the sequel. I have only to ask a thousand pardons for what I must confess to be a somewhat boyish lark, as you Inglesi call it, and to hope that I have not offended you by it."

"No, no; don't mention it," said I, hastily, for his graceful apology made me ashamed of my vexation. "I had no idea that any one could so completely disguise himself."

"Oh, that is nothing," said he, shrugging his shoulders.

"Isn't it?" said I. "May I ask you a question or two?"

He bowed, with a quiet smile that I am sure I read aright. "Yes, but I will answer only as suits me."

"Well, then, twelve years ago you used to me this expression, when I said I should know you again, 'Not you, it is not your trade,' implying that it was yours."

"What does monsieur take me for?"

"I don't know," said I, frankly, and with an irresistible laugh at the odd turn of the conversation. "You puzzled me then as now, but I perfectly remember my boyish judgment of you."

"And what was that, if I may ask?"

I hesitated, colored, and laughed.

"I am afraid it was not entirely complimentary, but, as I said, you puzzled me: you seemed to me under disguise, and yet you were unmistakably a man of birth—a gentleman."

A shade came over his handsome face, strangely regretful and sorrowful, as he said,

"A boyish judgment. You thought, then, that a gentleman could never be under disguise; yet your guess, Monsieur Casper, was not so very far wrong, for, as you English say, 'Necessity has no law;' but I have been or done no worse than most men. I am a gentleman still."

It needed no word to prove it. Patrician was indelibly stamped in every feature and movement.

There was a long silence, which I broke.

"I remember that when I saw you, twelve years ago, I could not at all be sure to what country you belonged."

I fancied that he shivered slightly, but he asked, quietly,

"Have you decided the question now, monsieur?"

"Why, yes. I fancy I can tell a man's nationality well enough; it is a thing that very few can conceal."

"True—as a general remark; what, then, am I? French, German—"

"No," said I, laughing at his allusion; "you are an Italian."

He bowed gravely, and leaning back, sat for a long time silent. So did I, until I remembered that he had an advantage, which I saw no reason to allow him, if I could help it."

"Signor," said I, "you have an advantage over me, and an exchange is no robbery. Might I ask the favor—"

My voice roused him from a deep reverie, for he looked up quickly.

"Of my name, Monsieur Von Wolfgang?"

"S'il vous plait, Monsieur l'Inconnu."

He laughed softly, and said, wrapping his mantle about him,

"At least, if monsieur wishes it, I can give him the name under which he will meet me, very possibly, at the house or in the company of a mutual acquaintance."

"Pest on him! Stumped again!" thought I, but I only bowed, and said,

"What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

"And *Romeo* by any other name would still be *Romeo*. Eh bien, call me Count de Cavagnac."

"As you so will it, monsieur. Ah, here we are at another station."

Again the train stopped, other passengers came in, and for the rest of the journey the conversation was general. I parted with my strange companion at the cab-stand outside the terminus with a shake of the hand, an "Adieu, monsieur," from me, and from him a quiet "Au revoir."

MANUSCRIPT XII.

OTHER DAYS COME BACK TO ME WITH RECOLLECTED MUSIC.

ONCE more, after twelve years, I was in the same country and city as Stewart Claverhouse, and likely to encounter him at any hour.

Can you understand or analyze the contradiction and conflict of my feelings towards this man? Can you understand how I at once longed and dreaded to meet him, longed with an intense longing, dreaded with an intense dread—of what? I knew not, save that years ago something dark and horrible had coiled itself serpent-like round my heart, and grown with my growth, lived with and in my life, till it seemed to have gigantic shape, like a curse, yet I had never longed so much to see him, to touch his hand, to hear again the sound of his voice, to know—ah, to know at last what it was that ever had been between us. I must go to him soon if he did not come to me.

One day I was sitting in the library alone, reading, for the twentieth time, Macaulay's "Battle of Lake Regillus." My back was towards the door, and I was so absorbed in the poem that I scarcely heard, and certainly did not notice, the door open, and a servant's voice saying something. I answered "Yes" absently, and went on reading; but the next minute I felt the same curious sensation of *his* presence that I had felt so often in our boyhood. It made me lay down the book, though with an impatient "Peste—I *won't* turn round!" but the impulse was too irresistible, and I rose hastily and turned round to see a tall, dark, grave man standing there as motionless as a statue, more perfect far in his grand beauty than any

statue that was ever chiselled. I stood gazing on him for a moment like one spellbound, and in that second's stillness a feather might have fluttered to the floor and been heard.

"Do you not know me, Casper?"

"Not know Stewart Claverhouse?"

Our hands met, and I drew him forward to my own reading-chair.

"Of all those I have ever known, Stewart, you are the man I have most wished, most longed, to see again."

He looked surprised, but only said,

"I am very glad, for I feared I might be intruding; nor should I have called now, but that the doctor told me you had expressed a wish to see me."

Deeper, more full and rich, but the very soft musical voice as of yore, the same gentle, winning manner, the same inexpressible grace and charm which had fascinated me long ago—matured, changed in much, but for all it was the same grave melancholy face and eyes that had haunted me from the first moment I saw him; the same Stewart, save for the difference of years that had changed the youth into the bearded man. He looked older, too, than he was, by nearly three years.

"You cannot intrude," I said. "In truth, I should have gone to you before now, only I went down to my brother at Dover; and, besides, great men like *il gran' maestro* are not so accessible as we every-day mortals."

"You rank yourself among them, then?"

"Why not?" answered I, lightly. "Never fear, I'll be famous enough some day, yet."

"An equivocal speech, isn't it? But now, Wolfgang, can you tell me anything of some of our old school-fellows?"

"Well, which of them? I have been a good deal out of England myself."

"I used to like some three or four of them very well," said Claverhouse. "What has become of Gus Seymour and Tom Dacre?"

"Both are in London. The former married this three years."

"What are they doing? Gus used to talk of the Bar."

"He stuck to it, and is getting on rapidly."

"That is—rapidly for the Bar," interposed the sculptor, smiling.

"No, not exactly; he is really very clever, extremely clever, and has a very pretty little fortune of his own, let alone what he calls a 'tail,' otherwise friends at court—viz., two large firms of attorneys, who are interested in his family, one way or another, and they have taken him by the hand. Besides, about a year ago he rather distinguished himself in a criminal trial—great forgery case. Oh, Gus is a lucky dog!"

"I am glad of it. He ~~was~~ is a fine, generous-hearted fellow, and deserves success. I shall find him out. Now tell me of wild, witty Tom Dacre. Which was right in their prophecy of him—you or I?"

"I don't remember to what you allude, Bonnet-rouge," said I.

"*That* old name. Why, you used to say that he was one of those

clever, witty, moneyed fellows who would never do anything. I never thought so. I always said he would make an object—work; his mind was too active to idle through life, moneyed though he was.”

“Well, by Jove! you were right,” exclaimed I, laughing. “He sowed his wild oats, like the rest of us. Why do you smile, Stewart?—just that odd smile of yours that used to puzzle me.”

“Never mind, Casper, go on; what did Tom do then?”

“Well, by Jove! he pulled up and buckled to in good earnest, and threw himself into politics, active and busy as the best of them. He can write and speak well, too, in his clever, pithy, witty way. Falconbridge swears by him. Tom often speaks of you.”

“I shall see him. Do you know what has become of that great bullying fellow?”

“That you once thrashed?”

“Ay, the same.”

“Oh, he’s gone to the dogs entirely. Kept a racing stud, got cheated, took to betting, married a girl who bolted with his groom. Then he took to drinking, was sold up, and sunk out of our sphere entirely. Tom did tell me that he had heard that he got kicked to death by a horse, but it mayn’t have been him; vicious chap—never forgot that thrashing.”

“Let him pass, and tell me of yourself,” said Claverhouse. “Finding you still living with your mother, I infer that you are still unmarried.”

“Yes, still free; my own master,” I said; “and so are you, or we should have heard of it. No fair Italian has, I suppose, been able to captivate you? What armor of proof are you cased in, Stewart?”

“I may retort the question.”

“Oh, I—I really don’t know. I’ve been in love a dozen times, at least, but never yet met the right lady, I suppose,” said I, giving the fire a poke. “Have you come at last to make your headquarters in your native city with your uncle?”

“Not my headquarters.”

“But you have fitted up a studio in your house?”

“Yes, because I shall remain here all the summer and autumn, and then, like the swallow, fly to the south to winter.”

“I say, Claverhouse, it strikes me that Doctor John enjoys your fine old hall and handsome town-house more than you do—everything but yourself.”

“Perdona, since I made him give up his school I have been much with the old man, or rather, he with me, for he came to me abroad. He was with me in America, too.”

“He is fond of travelling, then, even now?”

“He was till the last two years, but since then he prefers quiet.”

“Whereas you are as restless as ever,” laughed I. “I wonder you will give us your company for so long as six months.”

He laughed too, and answered,

“I have work in hand that will keep me.”

“I say, Stewart,” said I, suddenly, “wherever did you pick up that lovely model of yours—Fiora di Maria, that Provençale?”

Claverhouse gave me one of his quiet searching looks. "I picked her up in Rome."

"Just where I saw her—at the Colosseum. I had a long talk with her, quite a yarn, indeed; and you—the child thinks there is no one like the Signor Maestro. She would canonize you, I think."

"No, I think she has too good an opinion of me."

"Ha, ha! deeper villain better saint," said I. "Well, I don't think there is much of the saint, then, about you. Now, come up-stairs with me, and let me introduce you to my mother and cousin. I suppose you don't remember Nina, as you only saw her once, and that when she was seven years old."

"I remember her."

Long afterwards, cursing the hour I ever crossed his path, I remembered that quiet answer. Even then I glanced back at him; but his was a proud and very reserved face, and I could not read it.

When I opened the drawing-room door my mother was leaning back in an immense easy-chair, reading, I think, the last new novel; while, half sitting, half reclining, on the rug, was Nina, one little hand caressing or teasing Colin, the beautiful water-spaniel I had given her as a child, the other arm thrown round the brown head of my old favorite pointer, Don.

"Mother, I have brought an old friend," I began, and Nina sprung up hastily, while Georgine rose, and the dogs came fawning round Stewart. "My school-fellow, Stewart Claverhouse; my mother, my cousin Nina Lennox."

"Let me welcome Mr. Claverhouse as an old acquaintance by public and private hearsay," said Georgine, offering her hand; "my son has spoken of you so often that you seem no stranger."

"And to me, in truth, you are none," said Nina, holding out her hand in her frank, innocent way. "I may claim an old acquaintance, unless you have forgotten that ride with Cas and me."

"No, Miss Lennox, I have not; it was a most pleasant ride."

"Have you still got that magnificent black mare?" said I.

"Ayesha? She is alive, but superannuated now at Ernescliffe. I have an Ayesha the second, and she is the mother over again—as great a beauty in every way." And as he spoke he stooped to caress the dogs. "Are these yours, Miss Lennox?"

"Only the spaniel. Cas gave him to me years ago. Don is Casper's."

"You seem fond of dogs, Mr. Claverhouse," said my mother. "May I ask when you did this?" And she took from a small table an exquisite statuette of a Newfoundland dog, for which she had recently given a large price.

"I did that, madame, two years ago, and the original is probably at present lying in my studio." He said this as he rose to go, and my mother gave me an imploring look. I knew hers and Nina's long-standing wish, and I said, laughingly,

"Stewart, my mother has long had a great wish to visit your studio, if visitors are ever admitted."

"Madame and her friends will be welcome whenever they choose

to do me the honor," he answered, in his courteous, graceful manner, and took leave. I went down with him to the hall.

"Signor Scultore, I hope I have not trespassed too far in my request?"

"No, certainly not, Casper; I am glad you spoke."

"What day and hour will best suit you?"

"Any day and any hour between two and four. If I am out, my Italian servant Luigi will attend you."

"I hope you will be at home yourself. Till then, good-by."

I went back to the library and sat down. It was over. I had seen him again. Pleased I was, very pleased, but above all there was a sense of relief that showed me for the first time the phantom that in part had made me so dread him. What was it that had lifted the weight? He had forgotten his promise given to Nina twelve years ago—*tant mieux*; it was given only for a trifle, only to a child. How should the bearded man remember the boy's promise? He had forgotten it.

CHAPTER IV.

IL ANGELO'S ONLY FRIEND.

A TALL man in a felt hat came swinging along the broad pavement of — Square, and stopping at one of the handsome houses, knocked—a short, steady, determined knock that commanded attention. It was characteristic of the man, and he got instant attention, as he generally did. Guy de Cavagnac was not one to be easily gainsaid.

"Is Mr. Claverhouse at home?"

"No, sir; he is out riding with the doctor."

"Do you know when he will return?"

"I really can't say, sir; but Luigi will know."

Cavagnac walked into the hall.

"Will you be kind enough to summon Luigi, then? for I must see your master."

The man obeyed, and in two minutes there appeared a very good-looking Italian between thirty and forty.

The count drew his hat lower, and said, in his pure Tuscan,

"Hush! and show me to the maestro's own room."

The man started, looked earnestly at him, and drawing a long breath, led the way quickly up-stairs to a splendid library which opened from his master's studio.

There he shut the door with hands that actually trembled, and his voice shook, as he said, almost fearfully,

"Can I be mistaken? Holy Madonna! he was murdered! yet—is it the Signor Guido?"

Cavagnac threw off his hat, and held out his hand.

"Not murdered, but alive, Luigi Padella—myself in very truth."

Luigi clasped the slender hand, covering it with kisses, in the impulsive warmth of his Southern nature, till Guy gently drew it away, touched and wondering to find affection where he had hardly expected recognition; wondering the more because, in his restless life, he had known so little of it; neither giving nor receiving love or affection, save to the one friend of his earlier manhood—Stewart Claverhouse.

“Hush, Luigi mio, leave me here till the maestro returns, and then only tell him that a person is waiting here to see him.”

“Sì, signor.”

And Luigi retired.

But Guy de Cavagnac turned to the mantle-piece, resting his head on his hands against it as motionless as the statues in the room; and so time passed on unheeded, till at last the quiet opening and closing of the door caught an ear that scarcely any feeling or suffering could rob of its acuteness, and he turned. Fourteen years had rolled between them. Fourteen years had one mourned the other as dead; and clinging to his memory with the steadfast faith of a woman, loved no other man save that first and last friend of his boyhood. Fourteen years ago they had parted; and now the two men stood, for full a minute, face to face in a silence so intense that it hummed round them like the hum of summer insects. Then the younger stretched out both his hands, and the elder, locking them in an iron clasp, bowed his face upon them, silent still, sick with such emotion as even Stewart could not guess.

“Guido, car’ amico mio, it seems like a dream—too bright to last. Fourteen years is long to mourn.”

The Italian lifted his face, and his dark eyes were full of remorseful tears.

“Oh, Stewart, Stewart, forgive me! I have come back to you at last, weary, weary; absence became intolerable. Many a time I have been near you, ay, near enough to touch you, but I dared not come back. I should not now, save that something stronger than myself impelled me to return—an impulse that possessed me, heart and soul, from the moment I heard that child speak of you and call you by the old familiar name I had given you in your boyhood, because your name was strange to my Southern tongue. I could not bear it. I knew then that I must see you. Oh, Angelo, can you forgive me?”

“I can only feel that it is Guido’s hand I hold,” said the sculptor, gently. “Amico mio, it should have been before; I could not harm you.”

The Italian looked into the deep-gray eyes, and shook his head with that anxious, sorrowful smile of his.

“No, Stewart; but I might harm you.”

“You? Impossible.”

“Not willingly, God knows; I would die first!” said Guido, almost passionately; “but there are things over which man has no power.”

“Tell me how you could harm me, old friend.”

"God forbid!" said Cavagnac, almost recoiling. "Ask me nothing, Angelo; it is enough that the dread of it has kept me away all these years."

"It must do so no more, Guido."

"No more; neither of us could bear it a second time," the other said under his breath.

There was a silence, which the sculptor at last broke.

"Then you escaped the banditti?"

"Sì, after three months' horrible captivity."

"In all these long fourteen years where have you been? What have you done?"

"Where have I not been? What have I not done?" answered the other, wearily. "I have been in perils by sea, in perils by land, struggling often for bare life. I have been in the secret police of Paris and Vienna, and can always fall back upon it; for the detective instinct is strong in me, and I was their right hand. I have been all over the world, I may say, and served many peoples and languages. It was nothing to me that much was useless, impolitic, sure of failure. I was employed to do certain work, and I did it. In the end, by a hair's-breadth, I saved myself and the papers which would have sent the half of them to the scaffold. I have served Poles in Poland, and, thanks to the stupidity of one of them, I was never nearer losing my head. I was taken, tried, and though they had no proofs against me and could not wring a word from me, I was condemned to death. I could say too truly, 'Save me from my friends, and I will take care of my enemies;' but, like you, I am, and have been for many years, a Freemason; and, thanks to that fact, I succeeded in making my escape the very night before my execution. I have faced death a hundred times, and as near as that, but I never stood a better chance of being beheaded. Not that I care," he said, with a quiet, dare-devil recklessness very characteristic of the man. "It is my trade to cast my life on the hazard and play it against death."

"A losing game in the long-run. Now listen, Guido, and answer truly. Are you in want of money at present?"

"If I were, caro mio, I should not be here now."

"Guido, Guido, for shame; you are evading—"

"No, it is truth. I am a rolling stone that has gathered some moss. Besides, I am here at present in a detective character—secretly, of course."

"Whom are you seeking, if I may ask? You know you are safe with me."

"As the grave. I am tracking a man, a regular Communist, whom twelve years ago I hunted down in England and arrested here for forgery, which was only part of his offence. He was sent to the travaux-forcés, but three years after he escaped."

"Could not you find him at all?"

"They could not, and I personally never tried; for I had left their service, and was far enough away from la belle France. I think his existence was almost forgotten, till just lately we had information

that he was, or will soon be, in London, hatching a dangerous conspiracy against the French Government, in connection with Nihilists; and here am I really to watch, get proofs, and unearth ce beau monsieur là and his precious schemes."

"Do you think you will succeed?"

"If I do not they may send me to the bagno instead of him," said the detective, coolly.

"And what are you ostensibly?" asked the sculptor, smiling at the answer.

Guido shrugged his shoulders. "I am M. le Comte de Cavagnac, an Italian refugee, if they will, bearing a French title: comprenez vous?"

"Oui, M. le Comte; but to me you are always Guido."

"Ay, Angelo, always Guido di Schiara to you."

He paused, and then said in another tone, "Luigi knew me, so tell him that I have reasons for bearing another name. But your uncle—can you trust him?"

"As myself. He must know that the Count de Cavagnac is my only friend, Guido di Schiara."

"Eh bien, your wish is mine, amico mio." And the gentle smile that was the shadow of the sculptor's, lightened the bronzed, care-worn face. "I never could gainsay Il Angelo."

"I will fetch the old man, then," said Claverhouse, as he left the room.

The Italian rose and looked in the large mirror over the mantle-piece, then turned hurriedly from it.

"Another trial," he muttered. "Gran' Dio, if—"

The door opened, and Stewart came in again with Doctor John.

"My uncle, Dr. Fantony; M. le Comte de Cavagnac," said Claverhouse. "That is in public. Between us, privately, he is a man who was lost and is found again, whom for fourteen years I have mourned as dead—my old and only friend, Guido di Schiara."

The old man held out his hand. "Whom my boy loves is my friend," he said, with his grandly simple sincerity; and Guido Schiara bent, in deep and silent reverence, over that hand.

"Have you been long in England, count?" the doctor added.

"No, monsieur; I came to London a few days ago."

Doctor John started as the voice struck his ear, and gave a quick earnest glance from the Italian to the sculptor; but he only remarked,

"You are the second old friend Stewart has come across lately."

"Am I?" He glanced at Claverhouse, and smiled. "Have I a rival, then, Angelo?"

The sculptor shook his head.

"No; that is only façon de parler—an acquaintance, school-fellow, no more. Casper Von Wolfgang is no friend of mine."

"Him? No, impossible."

"What! you know him?"

Cavagnac laughed.

"A great deal better than he knows me. I first met him twelve years ago. I met him again in the train from Dover."

"Tell us the whole story, Guido," said Stewart; "it is amusing, for you have that old *méchant* laugh in your eyes; so let us hear it."

So Cavagnac told the story of his odd acquaintance with Wolfgang with a quiet humor, under which lay a deep vein of sarcasm that could be stingingly bitter and keen—a terrible weapon when its possessor chose to use it.

Doctor John said, with a little amused smile, "I fear, count, that my former pupil has not prepossessed you in his favor."

"Dr. Fantony, I will answer you frankly. I know young Wolfgang too slightly to judge him entirely. He is passionate, impetuous, jealous-tempered, and conceited. He has, no doubt, much good and many fine points; but whatever they may be, there is in him some vein that is in strong antagonism to my being. I feel towards him that intense, unaccountable distrust, in which I have never yet been mistaken, and, mark my words, he will justify it some day."

"God forbid!" said the old man, emphatically; "yet," he added, "Stewart has felt the same antagonism, and—but let it pass now. Stewart, let us adjourn to your studio."

"If you wish it."

And the sculptor led the way.

MANUSCRIPT XIII.

THE SCULPTOR'S STUDIO, AND HOW IL ANGELO REDEEMED HIS PROMISE.

I HAVE set myself a task, and I must accomplish it, but it is torture. I shrink from it, from what, in its accomplishment, must come with miserable horror; looking back, it is like an awful dream. Dante said that he found his "Inferno" in the world around him. I have found mine within me. But enough; let me go on.

It was a bright day when I took my mother and Nina to — Square to visit the great sculptor's studio.

We were shown, of course, to a most elegant drawing-room, where we had not long to wait, when the door opened, admitting a fine-looking Italian, over thirty years, whom I guessed to be the confidential servant mentioned by the doctor. He begged us to follow him to the studio, where the signor would be happy to see us; and he led the way up a wide staircase, along a gallery, and into an ante-room. Here our guide threw open a noiseless door, drew back a crimson velvet curtain, and ushered us into the studio itself.

There were three people in it, Claverhouse and Doctor John, who immediately rose to receive us; and—yes—that man again, the strange Italian, whom I now met for the fourth time under a name he had coolly admitted was not his own. I bowed, and Stewart introduced him to Georgine and Nina as "the Count de Cavagnac, an old friend of his own."

But let me pause.

Do you know that peculiar hushed stillness of a sculpture-room that makes it seem like sacrilege to speak above a whisper?—so calm and still, so grandly lifeless the marble, that in its presence life is hushed, as in the presence of something holy—the holiness of Art?

Shall I ever forget Nina's face as she stood in the centre of the room, drinking in the beauty round her, her hands locked, her lips half open, rapt, entranced. I glanced round, and saw the sculptor quietly watching her. The next moment I shivered; for, as I withdrew my eyes, I caught the keen, distrustful gaze of that dark, guileful Italian fixed on me, and my old hatred and fear of the man swept over me with tenfold force. I turned my attention resolutely to the sculpture and the room. It was lighted from above, and hung with crimson velvet, which threw the statuary out in strong relief, and made its whiteness almost dazzling. At one side was a boudoir grand piano in a handsome mahogany case, and beside it was spread a magnificent leopard-skin, in which lay a gigantic black Newfoundland dog, with his large observant eye watching us all, though he never moved; for I saw Stewart lift his finger to him.

How shall I describe the works of art, each one of which was a laurel on his brow; many strange and fanciful in idea, but each so lovely in conception, so perfect in execution! How time passed I know not; but I found myself at last standing with Nina before a group, not small—for no figure was under four feet high—but the gem of all, the pearl of greatest price. It might have been called "A wreck," literally and allegorically.

On a rough rocky shore lay a broken mast or spar, with a piece of torn rope still fastened to it, and near it on one side, as if flung there by the wild sea, lay the corpse of a beautiful woman, clasping with her right arm her dead child, whose delicate little form the pitiless waves had left almost nude. Exquisite was the contrast of those two faces; the peaceful, holy calm of the child's, the agony and wild terror on the mother's locked dead face—the look it had worn in her fearful struggle for life.

There were yet two other figures, the corpse of a man in the very prime of his manhood and noble beauty, drowned in saving the woman he loved; the slender, nervous hands locked about her slight form with a force that had made every muscle stand out, and the fine head thrown back, resting against her with a half-smile still on his lips, the smile with which, perhaps, he had looked up in her face and died; and she, that young fragile girl! I felt myself start and flush painfully; for she had Nina's face and beauty, but with such a look as hers must surely never wear—half crouching by, half clinging to the dead, one small hand putting back the hair from the calm brow, the other pressed on the silent heart, seeking in vain for one throb of the life that is stilled forever. There was passionate agony in the action, in every line of the figure, and in that beautiful face such hopeless, awful despair as few ever witness; the marble had life—the terrible life of a broken heart.

Was that all? No; the master-mind and hand had put the last perfect touch which made the grand work faultless. There was yet

another mourner, a Newfoundland dog, standing half on his mistress's disordered robe, with one paw laid on his dead master's breast, and his face lifted to the girl's with such a human look of sympathy, grief, and wistful appeal as we see perhaps only in a faithful dog.

How long I stood before that wonderful picture-sculpture I do not know, but when at last I turned it was to glance at Nina. Did she see the likeness? I could not tell. Her face wore the same rapt expression, though now her dark eyes were suffused with tears.

My mother's voice behind her addressing the sculptor jarred on her ear, and brought her abruptly back from the dream-world of Art.

"The work is perfect, but what gave you the model for this mourner?"

"Only memory, madame," answered Stewart's quiet soft voice.

I turned irresistibly, and glanced at him. Had I been mistaken? If he had remembered her so well, could he have forgotten that promise, simple trifle as it seemed? In that moment I cursed him—cursed the hour we two had ever met. I do so now; for in that hour a devil had entered into my soul.

My mother remarked, "The original of this noble dog I see on that leopard's skin; what is his name?"

"Fidelio, madame; a name he earned." As he spoke he rose, and came up to the group we formed; and hearing his name the dog came to him, pushing his nose into his master's hand.

Nina knelt down to caress him, and was affectionately received; for Fidelio put his great paw on her arm, and licked her face. My mother laughed.

"That child is always making friends with dogs. I tell her she will get bitten or hurt some day."

Stewart looked down on the girl and dog, and answered with that beautiful smile I had never hated till now,

"No dog will ever harm the signorina; they know by instinct those who love them."

"Just what I say," said I, bending to stroke the noble animal. To my surprise and annoyance, he raised his head, looked fixedly in my face, then in his master's, and whined uneasily; but on my again offering to touch him he uttered a low, deep growl, though he was silent the moment Stewart raised his reproving finger. I glanced nervously towards Cavagnac. I could not help it, nor the shudder which ran through me, when for the second time I met his deep fell gaze.

"Claverhouse, you should whip that animal for his ill-manners," said I, with what I meant for an easy laugh.

"I never whip Fidelio," he answered, gravely.

"Why not, in wonder's name?"

"Because, Casper, five years ago I was shipwrecked on the American coast, and he saved my life. How could I strike him after that?"

I lifted my hand to cover a sneer, but Nina said, warmly, "Of course not! You could not be guilty of such shameful ingratitude!"

My mother asked in her suave, somewhat sulky manner,
 "Then, Mr. Claverhouse, this sad story here has truth for its foundation?"

"Yes, madame."

"And, if I may ask, for what great art gallery is this extraordinary sculpture destined?"

"For none."

"What! none? What is the Art world about to let it stay here, Signor Maestro?"

"Nay, you and my friend Cavagnac are the only people, besides my uncle, who know of its existence."

"I am astonished. Was it not, then, executed for any one?"

The sculptor smiled.

"Yes, madame; for a lady."

"How I envy her! Do tell me who she is. Some foreigner of rank, for only a Pitti Palace ought to receive *that*."

"She is only an English lady, Madame Von Wolfgang, to whom, when I was a boy and she a little child, I gave a promise, which I hope she will consider I have redeemed"—he turned to Nina, bending low—"in begging her to do me the honor to accept this sculpture."

My soul seemed on fire, and something within me—all, perhaps, that was good—seemed to stand still, and then snap asunder forever. I can see even now Nina's face of wonder, and hear her half-hurried words,

"For me? I was only a child—and you have remembered such a trifle so long?"

"Not a trifle, Miss Lennox. I had passed my word, and I have only redeemed the pledge given."

Redeemed it! Yes, nobly indeed, as I might have known he would. The gift was like himself—splendidly graceful. Nina had no words, but her thanks had a far deeper language than all my mother's profuse expressions; for Nina simply held out her little hand with a tremulous smile, and in silence the great sculptor bent over it, slightly touching it with his lips in his graceful foreign fashion.

Then he turned to Georgine.

"I will have the sculpture removed to madame's house to-morrow, if that pleases her."

"Nay; when you please, Mr. Claverhouse," answered Georgine, rising, to my great relief; "we are ready to receive it."

"Grazie, to-morrow, then," and he touched the bell. The same attendant, Luigi, came in, and Stewart said,

"Luigi, will you cover that group again? and to-morrow let it be removed to Monsieur Von Wolfgang's house. You know where it is?"

"Sì, signor."

Luigi threw over the group a large veil of fine Indian silk, and retired.

"A handsome fellow that," said I. "If I may ask, Stewart, what rank in your house does he hold? for he looks far above a servant."

"He is not a servant. Luigi Padella is my friend and companion. He is everything—attendant, courier, and foreman of my workmen, for he was bred a mason. Luigi is, in fine, my right hand. I could not do without him."

"You give him a high character," said I, laughing. "I shall steal him from you."

"Beyond your power, Casper; beyond even that of Cavagnac there, who is Luigi's second love," he answered; and then exchanging adieus, we took our leave.

Nina was very quiet during the drive; but my mother would turn into the Park, and could talk of nothing else but Claverhouse, Dr. Fantony, the wonders of the studio, and that Italian.

"Pray walk the ponies, Casper," she said, "and tell me who he is. Is Cavagnac his name?"

And I must endure it, while I felt internally on fire.

"No, of course not, mother; he is an Italian—probably a refugee."

I fancied I saw Nina shake her head to herself doubtfully; but before I could speak, a very different thing and voice close to the phaeton made me start and pull up.

"Ah, monsieur, bon jour! il y a longtemps que je ne vous ai vu! je vous salue et les dames aussi."

"Anna de Provence!" I exclaimed, "and in London!"

"The original of the famous 'Fiora di Maria, n'est ce pas?' " said Nina, leaning forward.

"Oui, mademoiselle; I sat for it."

"And have you got a statuette of it? Let me look. Let me see what you have. Casper, give me your purse; I've forgotten mine, and— Ah, look there!" She pointed suddenly with her hand, and I turned to see a fine Calabrian wolf-hound bound to Anna's side.

"What a beauty! Is it yours?"

"Sì, signorina."

"You did not have him that day at the Colosseum, Anna-Marie," said I, touching the dog.

The hound growled slightly; and though Anna instantly bade him "Silence, Corsare!" I saw her face change, and she gave me a quick, keen, I thought distrustful, look; but the next second the mobile Southern face was smiling again as she answered me,

"He was not far off that day, monsieur—within my call."

"And what do you think of London, Fleur-de-Marie?"

"It is a great city, monsieur; grand, large, but not beautiful."

"It is very busy, though, Anna—full of life."

"Sì, signor; of life—and solitude."

One of her quiet, sad answers. I said, after a pause,

"Do you know that your friend, Il gran' Maestro, is in London?"

"I have seen him, monsieur, merci."

"Eh bien! Mother, have you chosen—and Nina?"

They had selected two statuettes, and three Roman cameos, real ones, for which Nina gave all the loose gold in my purse, despite Anna's assurance that "the statuettes were only a bagatelle, quatre francs, and les camei were only sept livres." Nina only smiled, and

kissed her hand mischievously as I drove on with a "bon voyage, Anna."

When I looked back again the Provençale and her dog were gone.

CHAPTER V.

HOW CAVAGNAC EMPLOYED ANNA DE LAVAL.

CASPER VON WOLFGANG had not misread Anna de Laval's look when her dog, as Stewart's had done, received his caress with a growl, and Corsare's nature was so friendly and gentle, save when his mistress was molested, that from him a growl in return for a caress was an event, and the child stood there long, pondering and thinking.

"Corsare, mon camarade," she said at last, shaking her beautiful head, "tu as raison."

"Ma chère enfant, what are you thinking of?" said a soft voice, and a hand was laid lightly on her shoulder. "You are lost in dreams; that will never make your fortune, pretty one."

The cameo-seller looked up in Cavagnac's handsome face, and said, with a quiet desolation that touched him to the quick,

"I wish I was dead—s'il plait à Dieu."

"Anna, my child, you pain me deeply; that is no wish for fifteen years."

"Perhaps not, monsieur; but I am alone in the world."

"So am I, Anna. I have tossed about for more than twenty years—since I was a lad. I have lost all, but I have seldom, if ever, felt a wish to die."

"Ah, but monsieur is a man, strong, and able to battle with the world, to rise above fate and adversity, moi, je ne suis qu'une fille," said the child, with a deep, sad pathos, of which she was evidently unconscious.

Something in the plaintive voice thrilled through Guido Schiara as it had never done before; and as he looked down on the delicate patrician face and form he shuddered to think of the utter friendlessness of this girl, whose refined training and extreme beauty were perhaps her worst enemies. He turned from her and paced to and fro for a few minutes; but catching her wistful, troubled glance, he stopped again—

"The Signor Angelo is your friend, mon enfant?"

The cameo-seller shook her head.

"He is generous, noble, my life is at his feet; but how can the cameo-seller dare to call the great sculptor her friend? The distance between them is too great."

"Yet he is your friend. If you were in trouble, Anna, you know that he would wish you to come to him."

"Monsieur, he has done so much for me already that I could not trouble him with my sorrows."

"My child, I understand and honor your feelings, but you know him too well not to know that nothing would pain him more than to hear you say that."

The Provençale's head drooped, and her dark eyes filled, but she only answered, "I cannot help it, monsieur; he shall not hear me say it."

"Yet he will know it, Anna; words are not always needed. Has he never before now drawn from you more than you meant?"

"Often, but I never care then. What the signor does must be right," said the child, innocently.

"Oh, woman, woman," murmured Cavagnac, "when wilt thou cease to worship?" But aloud he said, "He is perfect, then, in your eyes, Anna. Il Angelo in very truth."

"Sì; to me he is, because, whatever his faults, I have never seen them."

"By Heaven! nor have I," said Guido Schiara, strongly. "Yet even he has enemies—who has not? and the great and famous more than any."

"Monsieur, it is the tax which the great pay to le diable."

"C'est ça."

Once more he paced to and fro; but when he again stopped, his question was of another kind.

"Fleur-de-Marie, who was that you were speaking to before I came up—the man in the phaeton?"

"I do not know who he is, monsieur. I met him first at Rome. He is more than half an atheist;" and the Provençale shrugged her shoulders with an expression half of pity, half of contempt. Cavagnac laughed.

"He is somewhat handsome, eh?—half English, half creole-looking."

"Monsieur knows him?"

"Yes; shall I tell you his name, Anna?"

"If monsieur pleases."

"It is—remember it well, Anna—Casper St. Leger Von Wolfgang."

"I shall not forget it; but, monsieur—"

"What, my child?"

"Why am I to remember his name so well?"

"Because," said Guido Schiara, with a sudden bright gleam in his dark eyes that would have made Casper shrink—"because, Anna de Laval, he is Il Angelo's enemy."

"Madre di Dio! then I am his to the death!" said the Provençale, energetically.

"Give me your hand on that, Anna," said Cavagnac.

She gave it him, and the touch of that little soft hand, as it lay in his strong grasp, thrilled through the man as her voice had done only a short while before.

He held it a minute, and then dropping it, said,

"Now, listen, Anna-Marie; for if you are willing to do it, I have employment for you that could only be done by such a close, faith-

ful, keen person as you are. In your wandering life, have you ever served any secret society or police?"

"Oui, monsieur, the first, in Rome; the second, several times."

"Per Bacco! fallen on my feet again! I am at present engaged by the secret police of Paris to hunt out and watch a man who is believed to be in London hatching a murderous conspiracy; a woman—a girl like you—is a valuable assistant, and any information you bring me shall bear your own price. What say you?"

"I am at your orders, Monsieur de Cavagnac. Who is the man, and what is he like?"

"What disguise he may wear I do not know; but his real name is Louis Bonheur, and his real identity this—"

He took out a pocket-book, and drew from it a very good photograph of a Frenchman about forty years of age, with a rather good-looking but somewhat forbidding countenance.

Anna de Laval gazed long on it, studying every feature and line.

"I shall know Monsieur Bonheur anywhere," she said, as she at last gave it back; "but he looks no fool."

"If he were I should have no trouble; as it is, I have; but I hunted him down twelve years ago, and I shall do so again. I have never yet failed in anything I undertook—in the detective line, I mean. Now I must go; so adieu, mon enfant, and remember, after Il Angelo, to give the first place in your friendship to Guy de Cavagnac. No—I will trust you—give it to Guido di Schiara."

"Sì, signor. I could never forget the man who has trusted the wanderer." And touching her lips to his hand, she turned away.

There were heavy tears in the Italian's dark eyes as he, too, went his solitary way.

No doubt of her faith ever crossed him. Suspicious, distrustful as he was, the thought never entered his mind that this cameo-seller might play him false. He knew too well the nature he had trusted.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRANGER WHO BOUGHT A STATUETTE.

ANNA DE LAVAL wandered on, offering her graceful wares to the passers-by; but her plaintive "*Achetez, madame—à bon marché,*" only obtained mostly a negative in one form or another, a shake of the head, a "No, thank you," and not infrequently a rough refusal, or harsh "I don't give to beggars or tramps;" and one finely dressed dame said condescendingly, "It is a pity such a nice-looking girl as you don't follow some respectable trade; you ought to be ashamed of such a vagrant life." The proud blood of a long line of knights flushed to their descendant's fine face, and she answered, with haughty bitterness, "To learn a trade costs money, and I was not born or bred to it."

No, poor child; the worse for her.

Somewhere about dusk she turned, wearily enough, into one of the West End squares, before one of the houses of which an Italian organ-man had just struck up the graceful "Fiancé's Waltz." There were children and a lady at the window, and the Provençale, pausing, held up a statuette. But the lady shook her head, and at the same time opening the window, she threw out some pence to the man, bidding him "not stop."

The coins fell near the cameo-seller; she picked them up and gave them to the young man, whose bright, dark eyes rested in surprised admiration on her as he received the money.

"Oh, I am very much obliged to you," he said as he slung his organ, and lifted his hat, with a courtly wave, to the lady.

"A salute is more than she deserves," said Anna, indignantly, and in French. "Men are not dogs, to throw things at like that!"

The man stared for a second, and then laughed, half amused, half bitterly, "One must send all that au diable, eh—or we might starve—you see, camarade. Are you going my way?"

"As well as another—yes."

"Ces Anglais despise us," resumed the man, as they moved on. "They call us—I've heard them—idle fellows, and say, 'Why don't those lazy organ-grinders stay at home or work at trades?' Bah, il me fait rire! we cannot stop at home to starve, we are too poor to learn trades—que faire donc?" shrugging his shoulders. "Take me, now; I am from Parma. Do you know Parma?"

The cameo-seller nodded.

"Eh bien, there was no work to live by there; and my parents, the Madonna rest their souls! were too poor to apprentice me to any trade or craft, and one must live, so here I am. Et je vous dis," said he, energetically, "it is hard work carrying this organ, parbleu; harder than ces gens là would believe! and, hot or cold, early and late, in rain or snow, we must be out all the same, often wet, cold, hungry—"

"And shelterless," added the Provençale.

"C'est vrai—you know that, too?"

"Ay," said the child, quietly, "too well. My trade is very uncertain. The first night I was in London I slept on a door-step, with Corsare here for a pillow."

"He is a fine dog. A portico is all the shelter I expect to get to-night," he added, with a half-laugh that ended in a sigh. "I have had bad luck to-day, et je n'ai pas d'argent; what these Inglesi call hard up!"

The Provençale quietly drew forth some silver, and putting it into his hand, said, in her gentle way, "Take it, camarado mio; the Madonna sent me luck to-day, and I have more than enough for both."

"Eh, per Bacco!" said the astonished Parmese, offering to put it back, "keep it all, fanciulla, for you will need it. I am a man; it won't be the first or last time I have slept out."

"Nay, then, less reason to do so now."

"Mais—"

"Basta, basta; we are compatriotes," said Anna-Marie, adding, half laughingly, "I will come to you when I am hard up, if you tell me your name."

"I wish you would. My name is Giovan' Tofanni; and yours?"

"Anna-Marie."

The young man glanced at her, and said, "It is the name, then, of a friend. Have you ever sat to artists?"

"More than thirty times," answered the cameo-seller. "Why do you stop? Is this one of your houses where you play?" For Giovan' had stopped and unslung his organ.

"Yes, I get twopence here always," he answered, and began playing, while Anna leaned against the area railings, waiting till he went on again. It was a quiet street, with little traffic, so that an approaching step made the child look up just as a man drew near. Something indescribable about him told the foreigner, for nothing of him was visible save a large loose overcoat, with a high collar turned up, a thick brown beard, and a broad-brimmed American-looking hat, worn very low. He glanced at the man, at the Roman cameo-seller, and the statuettes on her box, and stopped.

"I don't know which is the most beautiful," he said; "what price do you ask for this statuette?"

"Six sous," said the Provençale, shortly, and without moving, for the tone and manner did not please her.

"Hein," said he, laying the coin on the box, and taking up the statuette; "you don't know, of course, what this is meant for?"

"Probably monsieur does not; it is Il gran' Maestro's famous Madonna."

The man wrapped his loose coat about him, and walked swiftly away, just as a servant came out and gave Giovan' twopence; then a few more tunes, and the two wanderers once more moved on, still in company, for, despite the great difference between them, they had much in common; both were strangers, both homeless and friendless, in a foreign land.

"Have you been long in England?" the man asked.

"No, not long; have you?"

"What, me? Yes; some years, on and off," he answered, giving his organ a hoist, and passing his hand under the strap which crossed his chest.

"That is painful, that strap," said the child. "It cuts the chest."

"Yes. So I hold it off like this; and the organ is heavy, even when one is used to it."

"It is not your own, of course?"

"Yes, it is; and hard work and long time it took to pay in for it; but, you see, I did it at last. It isn't as good as I would have liked, but I could not scrape up more."

"How much was it, then?"

"One-and-twenty pounds; it is one of Cavioli et Corvi. You see," said Giovan', with a frank laugh, "if la Sainte Vierge had been pleased to make me un beau garçon, I could have been a 'model' as well, mais elle ne m'a pas donné la beauté, so I could

not get money that way. Are those things"—touching her box—"your own?"

"Yes, all of them; some are real *camei*, which I brought from Rome and Florence."

"E perchè!" exclaimed Giovan', opening his bright eyes wide; "how did you manage that?"

"By sitting for a model," said Anna, with a mental reservation, which, though speaking the strict truth, kept to herself the real fact that the cameos were the sculptor's parting gift. "I sold some to-day to a bella signora, and a few I have sold in the shops—to jewellers."

"How do you get them to believe they are real? Pour vos beaux yeux, eh?"

"No; they can see for themselves, just as Cavioli or Corvi can tell a good organ from a bad. Why do you stop?"

"Because I must go down this street; and you?"

"I must go straight on. I shall not stop out late to-night."

"Good-night, then, camarade; we may meet again, perhaps."

"It is very likely; I hope we shall," she answered. "Au revoir, Giovan'."

And the two wanderers parted; each went a different way; but that night, when the poor organ-player lay down to rest beneath the shelter of a roof, a fervent blessing on the child went up to Heaven that surely descended on her head.

It was somewhere near eight o'clock when the cameo-seller returned to her humble room to share her simple supper with her faithful friend Corsare. Even if it were only a cup of water and crust of bread, he had his half. Sometimes it was not even that; but it was very rarely that Corsare went without food; for many were the times that his mistress, utterly penniless, scorning to beg a penny for herself, had paused at a butcher's open shop, and offered her prettiest statuette for a handful of bones for her dog, and she had never yet been refused. "La Sainte Vierge has always a care for the sorrowful, mon chien," she would say, in the gentle way which Corsare perfectly understood and appreciated.

But to-night there was supper for both, and Corsare would pause in the crunching of a fine juicy bone to look up affectionately in his mistress's face, as if glad that she was eating too. He was still at her feet, crunching busily, when the landlady appeared at the door holding out a letter.

"This come a while back, miss," for so the woman instinctively called her patrician lodger; "leastways, it can't mean no one else. A furrin chap brought it, and says he, 'Is Madmerzel Anna in yet?' 'No,' says I, 'she ain't. Did you want her very pertikler?' says I. So then he gave me this."

"Merci bien, madame; it is for me."

"'Tain't often as my lodgers gets letters now," said the woman, curiously.

"Eh, why not?" asked the Provençale, amused.

“ ‘Cause, my dear, they's poor, and got no friends. No more ain't you, I s'pose?”

“No, none. I am a foreigner and a stranger here.”

“Maybe you've friends at home in furrin parts?”

“I have no home, madame.”

“There's heaps like that, anyway,” said the woman, sighing, “and a roof over one's head ain't always a home. Wish I hadn't never married away from *my* home, I do often,” said she, as she went away.

Anna-Marie opened the letter, which was in Italian, but she knew the bold yet delicate hand for that of the sculptor. It was only a few lines.

“To-morrow morning, Anna, go about eleven to No.12 — Street, and ask for Miss Lennox, the lady who was with Monsieur Von Wolfgang to-day and bought of you. She wants you to sit to her for a drawing. Go in your Roman dress, and take Corsare. Your friend
“ANGELO.”

“Corsare mio, we are going to sit to a bella signorina,” said the child, “so we will sleep now, amico.”

MANUSCRIPT XIV.

ARTIST, MODEL, AND SPECTATOR.

I WAS enjoying a smoke and the last new novel in my own study the next morning, when in walked Miss Nina and perched herself on the arm of a huge easy-chair.

“Puff, puff,” said she, saucily; “what clouds you do throw off. I wonder why men must smoke. I shall take to it, to keep you company.”

“Try,” said I, offering her a box of choice Havanas.

“Not yet, sir. Put down that silly book, you bad boy, and attend to me.” And her little slender hand drew it away.

“You impudent child, you never leave me in peace, even in my own sanctum.”

“Your sanctum! *yours!* Ha, ha! the latest joke. Why, you haven't a sanctum where I mayn't come in and spoil your very precious peace. Casper, you are an unmitigated humbug, a downright hypocrite.”

Was I not one in very truth? I leaned forward, feigning to knock the ashes from my pipe, striving to master and crush the wild beating of my heart. “And what does your imperious highness want—a ride, a new dress, more music, or money?”

“Now, Cas, you know that if I want money I come boldly and ask for a check.”

“So you do, my dear—just as a highwayman cries ‘Stand and

deliver;' but I *have* heard of such a thing as a young lady coolly emptying my purse to buy pretty trifles from a Roman cameo-seller. Of course you don't know such a young lady, though."

She laughed gayly.

"Here's the money," she said, tossing some gold to me. "Don't say I don't pay my debts."

I threw it back.

"You may as well keep it, Miss Nina, for it's as broad as it's long; you'll come for more, you extravagant fairy."

With a sudden change of face she came and sat down on the rug, looking up with an expression half grave, half wistful.

"Am I very extravagant, Casper? Do I squander your money too fast?"

"My dear Nina, spend what you will, and ask me for anything you want. All I have is yours," said I, energetically; "my greatest pleasure is to gratify you in everything."

Impulsive, quick to emotion, I saw the tears gather in her dark eyes, and she kissed my hand as it lay on my knee.

"You were always too kind and good to me, Casper, and indeed I am grateful for it, if affection is any repayment, for I could not love you better if you were in very truth my brother."

A sudden cold chill went through me, and a mist came before my eyes. Was that all? Did I know now to the full one secret of my own heart, one object of my life, to be gained at all costs and hazards? Stewart Claverhouse had told me truly, years ago, that I had no ambition save that of the pleasure-seeker; but now, if I had not his grand ambition, I had an object which he had not. I could not answer her last words directly, and so turned it off.

"Well, Fayre Una, remember you are to be as extravagant as you like; it's what such fairies as you are born for."

"That is what troubles me, Casper. No one is born to do nothing, to be nothing. I can understand," she said, with a heightening color and dilating eyes, "the thoughts and aspirations of such men as Michael Angelo and Mendelssohn! ambition for one's art! fame for that which we love! For such fame I could die; for such ambition I could lay down everything."

"Nina, how you look!" exclaimed I, startled, feeling that something in her vaulted far beyond anything that I dreamed of or understood. "Are women, too, ambitious for themselves, apart from the one they love?"

"Ay, apart from the self-aggrandizement which too often passes for ambition. True ambition will not stoop to meanness or crime, lest it degrade itself, and the art or science or country for which it labors and crowns with its laurels. You," she said, and her deep-blue eyes seemed actually to grow—"you, who have none, cannot understand or comprehend the sacrifices such ambition will make, or the height to which it soars. In your secret heart it awakens a sneer, perhaps at times a certain wonder, but no emulation; yet you have talents."

"Ay," said I, with a new and strange shadow in my very heart,

"but all are not born alike. I have talents, position, wealth, and a love of ease and pleasure, if you will. I have all I want. Why should I burden myself with this hydra, this weary ambition, whether for one's self or one's art? I *don't* understand it or its pleasures. It is all toil and discontent, ever crying 'more, more,' even while mounting."

"There is happiness in that very element," she answered; "in every upward step, in the very toil and labor, in the mere doing. There is happiness in overcoming, one by one, the very difficulties which lie in the upward road."

"Your moralists tell another tale, Nina. Was Cromwell the Protector as happy a man as Cromwell the farmer? Was Pitt the minister a happier man than if he had lived in private?"

"Yes. To Pitt and such as he a life of obscure tranquillity is death. You might as well cage an eagle, and think it will be happier because it is fed and warmed, and kept safe from the attacks of its enemies. Moralists sit in their studies and write a great deal of nonsense. It's a mistake, too often a sickening cant, to call ambition, in the abstract, an evil and miserable thing—a curse. Like most other things implanted in man by God, it is a gift, and must be guarded and bounded by his laws. It only sinks down and becomes a curse when man abuses it. Your happiness is to lie at ease in the soft valley; Stewart Claverhouse's is in climbing the mountain."

"Then where is his advantage if, after all his labor, he is no happier than I am?"

"Ay, but he is. God, in his wisdom, has so ordered it. Perhaps to you I had better say that man is so created that the highest happiness (as a rule) is attained by him who works in one form or another for others; and as a proof of it, you see that most men of some position and competence, or wealth—men who could live as idle a life as you if they chose—most of such men, I say, *make* work if they haven't got it."

"Stop, Nina. We all know what setting one's own tasks means—working in a very easy way."

"No, you are wrong, Casper—entirely wrong. Some take to farming, others to science, the arts, literature, various social subjects, politics, working hard, too. Take the Legislature, the upper and lower house: not one member of either is obliged to take on him that work. He gains nothing by it; no money, only more position and consideration."

"And patronage, ma'am?" said I.

"Of course. The patronage, the consideration of his compeers, the occupations, form a large part of his happiness; it is a field for his energies, which would otherwise kill him with *ennui*. Man is a busy, working, active being; and when he is lifted above the struggles for daily bread, his restless brain turns to something else. Why, the House of Commons is largely, if not half, composed of men of fortune, who could sit idle instead of plunging into politics; and the rest, hard-working lawyers, mercantile men, and others living

by their hand or brain, find motives enough to make them work still harder. It is a pleasure in itself to work out the result of your own labors. It is seen in a child. Take two boys of ordinary energy and capacity: give one a toy-ship (for example), and to the other materials for making one, so that he can turn out an equally pretty vessel—which do you suppose will have the greatest enjoyment in his toy? Of course the boy who made it, tired himself over it, cut himself, failed often, and tried again and again till he succeeded. The toy is his creation; the object of his hopes, fears, ambition; the result of his own labors, and he is rightfully proud of it.”

“Then,” said I, “a man has an equal right to be proud of his labor; yet I often hear you blame those purse-proud upstarts who have worked hard enough for their fortune, too.”

“Yes, so I do, when on the strength of it they become upstart, over-boastful, overbearing, and pretentious. The principle is good, but it has run wild and overgrown. You never heard me blame a man who, without that pretension, takes an honest pride in his being self-made. Such a man was George Stephenson, James Watt, and many others like them; and such men I honor.”

“You set a great store by *work*,” said I. “Why should a man work if he has neither necessity nor inclination for it? Take me, for instance, and I am a type of many. I have birth, position, a fair share of good looks and talents, and a good fortune; but the corner that I suppose should be filled up by ambition or energy is occupied by a vein of idleness, dislike to trouble, if you will, a pleasure-seeking vein. I seek it, and find it. Why should I work when I hate it? I am as happy in my way as your Pitts were, or as Stewart Claverhouse is in his manner. In what, then, is he better off than I am?”

“In the mere possession of energy, without which talent is useless. If you were both put down penniless in this London, he would make his way and become something, and you would not.”

“Well, even admitting that, did I make myself?”

“No; but we can overcome nature to a great degree—root out or subdue our bad qualities.”

“The deuce we can!” said I; “but I am still unanswered. I have got as much pleasure as I want in the easy life I lead. Why should I burden myself with any definite labor? Isn’t the first aim and end of life happiness, enjoyment, getting the most out of it that we can, whether in work or idleness?”

“The mere pursuit of personal happiness is not the end and aim of life,” said Nina, energetically; “and if all men thought and acted so, the world would be a thousand times more miserable than it is. We were created, not for idleness, but

“‘To work, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.’”

Adam was told, ‘in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread.’”

"Stop there, Nina! On your own ground that was a curse."

"Yes. The hard labor by which most men gain their daily bread was given as a curse; but that doesn't say that all work is so, or that any man has a right to be a mere pleasure-seeker—it is an abuse of the talents intrusted to us. 'To whom much is given, of him shall much be required.' An account must be rendered of every penny spent, every word spoken, every action done."

"To whom, I want to know?" demanded I. "Who will ask it?"

The blue eyes opened wide.

"Why—oh, poor Casper, you don't believe in God!" she broke out suddenly, kneeling before me, and hiding her face against my breast.

"Nina, Nina, don't! I am too hopeless and worthless a sceptic for your tears. I don't deserve them, my darling," I said, bending over her; but there was a strange, horrible, choking feeling in my throat—a terrible dread that I had lost all but her pity, yet no ray of her faith in a Deity shot through me. From my cradle I had scoffed, and scepticism wrapped my soul like a mantle. Soul! Have I a soul? Is there a hereafter? It *cannot* be, ye powers of darkness! There cannot be an eternal future of nameless gloom and terror! I dare not believe *now*. It were nothing but damnation!

Presently she rose, and said sorrowfully, "I wish I could make you have faith even as a grain of mustard-seed, but I am not good and wise enough."

"You? Nina, you are like the angels you believe in. I am not fit to touch you, I believe!"

"Hush, hush! You are still my own dear old Casper; only don't talk so."

Before I could answer there came a tap at the door. It was a relief to me.

"Come in!" I said.

It was one of the servants.

"Miss Nina, the foreign girl you told me was to come is here, in your boudoir, as you ordered."

"Yes, that is right!" exclaimed Nina. "Come, Cas, you may witness the sitting."

I followed her up-stairs to her boudoir, and there, sure enough, stood the picturesque Roman cameo-seller and her handsome dog, which I did not caress this time. Anna saluted us in her usual graceful way, and Nina, busily placing her easel and chinks, said,

"You have been used to sitting for a model, haven't you, Anna-Marie?"

"Sì signorina, to painters; to no sculptor except the Signor Angelo."

"Ah, no. Well, I am only going to do you in chinks—you and your noble hound. What is his name?"

"Corsare, mademoiselle."

"How will you keep him quiet when you are placed?" said Nina.

"If mademoiselle will tell me how she wants him placed, I will do it, and bid him stay so. He will not move then till I order him,"

"The dear old fellow!" exclaimed Nina, hugging the wolf-hound; "he shall be rewarded with a dishful of choice bits, the great beauty, that he shall. Anna, how do you think I got at you?"

"Je ne sais pas," said the girl, with a curious, half-amused smile.

"Very simply. I recognized you as the original of the 'Fiora di Maria,' and some others, and I guessed that Mr. Claverhouse would know where to find you; so I sent to ask him last evening, and he answered that he would send you a message to come to me, which of course he has done. How will you stand—what attitude?"

"As mademoiselle wishes," said Fleur-de-Marie, lifting her hand to cover a smile, which, however, Nina caught, and broke into her sweet, joyous laugh. "Casper, she is laughing at me; what a shame, Anna!"

"Oh, mademoiselle, I did not laugh."

"You were smiling, though, at me. There now, you are covering your lips again."

"But mademoiselle is so amusing," said the cameo-seller, fairly covering her lips to stifle the soft rippling laugh that was irresistible.

"Am I? Well, never mind; laugh as much as you like, Anna. Casper, please draw forward that great marble vase. Now, Anna, stand by it, and open your image-box; take the prettiest statuette in your right hand, and rest your left on Corsare's head—so," said she, coming up and placing her model as she wished; and a more graceful attitude, a more perfectly beautiful picture than the child and dog presented, I never saw.

For some time there was silence, while Nina's fingers sketched boldly and rapidly the outlines of her model, to get the position in the first sitting. Gifted in all things, taught by the best master, Nina was already a very beautiful amateur artist, and quite equal to do justice to the model before her. Silence did not reign for more than half an hour, for then Nina began asking the Provençale her history, of which, however, Anna gave her little more than she had to me; and from that we passed easily enough to various subjects—travels, the arts, politics; and here Anna was more unreserved. I was astonished at the amount the wanderer had seen in her short life, at her information, and the keenness and breadth of her observation; nothing had passed her by unnoticed.

The two hours flew by, and the clock chimed half-past one before we thought it was much over twelve.

"Well," said Nina, rising, and laying a half-sovereign on Anna's open box, "I have got the position perfect. When can you give me another sitting?"

"When mademoiselle pleases."

"On Thursday, then, at eleven; so au revoir, Anna-Marie."

"Adieu, mademoiselle; monsieur, bon jour."

And girl and dog, fellow-wanderers, went forth again. Nina from the window watched them out of sight, and then turned away with a heavy sigh.

"My sweet Una, what is the matter?"

"It makes me sad, Casper," she said; "that beautiful child, well

educated, delicately born, delicately bred, as refined in every way, as much a lady in every sense, as I am; and yet I live in luxury, and she is a homeless wanderer, alone in the wide world."

And with a very quiet, saddened brow, she turned to put away her drawing.

MANUSCRIPT XV.

THE ROOT STRIKES DEEP.

YOU, to whom I address this story of wrong and misery, give me, if you can, some pity, and, if there is a God, pray for one to whom belief *now* is eternal death, whose only hope is that soul and immortality have no existence; one who is accursed, body and soul—if he has a soul.

You have seen the dark fell thing that had coiled about me poisoning what should have been a pure fountain; and you have seen that, side by side with it, lay the strange, mysterious fascination which drew me so irresistibly to Stewart Claverhouse.

It is said that the dove is fascinated by the serpent. Has no one ever thought that the serpent might be fascinated by the dove, the devil by the angel?

Well, I went one day to his house, as I had said I should, and asked for him. His Italian attendant Luigi showed me to the drawing-room, saying that his master was in his studio at work, and he believed M. de Cavagnac was with him, but he would see.

So, then, that man had the *entrée* of the great sculptor's studio; I had not.

I turned to look round the drawing-room, and my attention was instantly attracted by a full-length portrait of a young and lovely woman, grandly beautiful; but the face was certainly not strange to me, that clear, dark, colorless complexion, that silky waving hair actually gleaming in its raven blackness, those perfectly chiselled features, and large, grave, melancholy gray eyes—I knew them all; I had seen them a hundred times in Stewart. Had *she* died young? And while I gazed and wondered, Claverhouse and the Italian came in together; and the moment the usual greetings had passed I asked,

"Stewart, who was this lady?"

"She was my mother."

"I thought it; I always thought you must be like your mother, and have always wished to see her."

Cavagnac had paused before the picture, gazing up into the noble face, and I heard him murmur,

"How beautiful! Oh, how beautiful!" but he started and turned away as my voice struck his ear.

"Stewart, what was her name?" said I, suddenly.

"Cora."

I stood looking at the portrait, fascinated.

Cora! What a sweet name! Like her face. Oh, if my mother had been like this one!

"Did she die young?" I said, half to myself, but the sculptor answered it quietly,

"Yes; when I was born."

"Then you cannot remember her?"

"Remember her! I never knew her save in my dreams."

"And you were an only child, the doctor told me," I added, turning round.

He half smiled.

"You must have mistaken him, Casper. I am the only living one of four, all older than I—they all died."

But the subject pained him, and to change it I asked,

"Shall you be at the opera to-night? They play 'Der Freischütz' for the first time this season."

"So I saw; yes, I shall go—Guido and I. Are you disengaged, Casper?"

"Why, no—I am in attendance to-night on my mother and Nina to a concert, and then to finish the evening at my brother's; they give a ball."

"I remember that Lady Falconbridge told me of it the other day when I met her. We will drop in after the opera, you know," he added, smiling; "they are so kind as to give me fairly the *entrée* to their house, and *carte-blanche* to bring any one I like. Cavagnac is a great favorite there."

"Indeed!" said I, negligently, but giving a furtive glance at the count. The dark, keen eyes met mine full for a moment, and then went straight to Stewart's face, but with what a change! How they softened into inexpressible tenderness and love! I am quite sure that man would at any moment have laid down his life for Stewart Claverhouse, round whom every tendril, every fibre of his nature, seemed to have twined. I could understand it perfectly, and hated him the more because it was returned measure for measure, while I was excluded; I, who from our boyhood had vainly coveted what this Italian had won without an effort.

Stay! Was it without an effort? Love begets love. Had I given what he had? Did I *love* Stewart? No; I was fascinated, drawn by some invisible power in him, but love could find no place beside the dark horrible thing that lay coiled round my heart, and had of late taken a darker, deadlier form.

What had this Cavagnac that I had not, to make Stewart love him as he did? his beauty? his mind? his heart? Which had first sought the other? and what, oh, what subtle antagonism had ever stood between me and Claverhouse? I must know; and the moment the Italian went, saying he would return soon, I turned abruptly to Claverhouse.

"Stewart, *what* is it that has always stood between us, a barrier I cannot pass? What is it in me that is wanting?"

I spoke passionately, suddenly; and he gazed at me with a look which, for a second half wondering, grew deeply, painfully sorrow-

ful—that strange look of sublime, almost more than human, pity, which I had seen once before, and never could forget if I were to live a thousand years. Then he laid his slight hand on my shoulder, looking into my very heart with those deep, spiritual eyes.

“Casper, you want SOUL.”

The words were few; the voice very low, very grave, strangely pitying in its touching music; but I staggered as if lightning had struck me, and turning from him, covered my face.

Was this the answer I had looked for, hoped for, watched for, for years? Was it what I expected? No; and it stifled and crushed me beneath a load of inferiority. Between this pure being and me there stood, then, an invisible mystery; something that I *felt* was there, yet could not see or comprehend; something far above and beyond my range of vision, with which I had neither part nor sympathy.

I seemed groping in darkness that I could feel; heart and brain were in a tumult of fierce, burning torture. One moment my impulse was to turn and fly his presence forever; the next, to fling myself at his feet and cry,

“Teach me, even me, what is this wondrous soul!”

But his soft, cool hand touched my burning fingers; his gentle, grave voice fell like soothing music on my ear:

“Forgive me, Casper. The answer should never have passed my lips if I had known it would pain you.”

I dropped my hands, and mastering myself, faced him again.

“The pain is not your doing, Stewart; the question was mine. I drew the answer, and on me be it. But now I have it, I am only puzzled—strangely pained. The answer is to me incomprehensible. I don’t understand all it involves.”

A troubled expression came over his fine face. I could see that he had not calculated on a darkness so profound as was betrayed in my last words. To give the simple answer which he felt was one thing; but to explain it to a mind obtuse to all that he believed and lived in, was something very different—an impossibility I know now; but then—

“Stewart, Stewart!” I broke out at last, “would I could understand or fathom your nature one-hundredth part!”

He shook his head with a half-sad smile. There was no crossing the broad, deep river that ever flowed between us.

I turned, and paced to and fro, wild, passionate thoughts surging in my brain. “I would I had never seen him—never looked on him! Boy and man, he has haunted, fascinated, crushed me; tortured me, I know not how or why! He loves that dark Italian better than life. He can even love Luigi; but me—*me* he cannot even like!”

The last thought formed itself into words, and passed my lips before I was aware, and, low as they were muttered, reached his sensitive ear.

“Car’ amico mio, I never told you that.”

“Told me? No, you are too noble, too generous, to willingly give pain; but I can feel and see it! My presence gives you no pleasure,

my absence no pain. I am nothing to you. You may speak of me as one of 'my friends,' because there is no other word. You called me *amico* just now, empty *façon de parler* of your flowery Italian, which you give as much to Luigi and your dog Fidelio; but I never had your confidence, never could break down your reserve. You do not count me your friend in very truth!"

"No," he answered, quietly; "I have only one *friend*. Jonathan had but one David."

"Yet," I said, bitterly, "your Italians say, 'If I have fifty friends, it is not enough.'"

"If I have one enemy, it is too much," said a soft, deep voice, that to me always had a world of irony beneath its quiet tones.

"Monsieur should give the context."

I turned, with a start, to meet the brilliant, steadfast eyes of Guy de Cavagnac.

How I hated that man! how I feared him! not physically, not morally, but as man fears some mysterious unseen power, untangible, invisible, save to the subtle instinct which unerringly forewarns him that it will one day do him dread, irremediable evil.

I feared his sarcasm, and writhed beneath his irony, because I could not retort it—the shafts always struck too deep. I hated him. I hated Stewart for loving him.

I forced myself to answer lightly, "The context was not needed, Monsieur le Comte."

"Ah, non?" said he, shrugging his shoulders; "mais c'est vrai, n'est ce pas?"

"Well enough," said I, nonchalantly. "Good-by, Stewart, till this evening."

I passed out, but Claverhouse followed me. He had given a wound, and must pour in the balm.

"Casper, I am afraid you have misunderstood me. I was glad to see you when I came back to England. If your presence gave me no pleasure, if I disliked your companionship, I should have found means to let you know it. Forgive me if I have pained you."

"It was my doing, not yours."

I wrung his hand and went away. His last words were in my head as I walked home. I was unanswered even now. "If I disliked your companionship—" that was not liking *me*. Whether intentionally or not, his Jesuit answer had, for the second time, defeated me. Beyond the fascination, the strange charm of his presence, its spell faded, and the fell, dark thing that lay in my heart took deep ineradicable root.

I dreaded the evening at the Falconbridges'. I dreaded meeting Claverhouse and Cavagnac there. I hoped that they would not come, but they did, half an hour after us. I heard a lady behind me whisper eagerly, "There he is at last—the great sculptor. Do you see, Mrs. Norman?"

"Yes; a very handsome man, a most beautiful countenance. I met him abroad, you know. Who is that handsome man with him?—a foreigner, certainly."

The first speaker answered,

"It is the Count de Cavagnac—an Italian."

"Italian! with that name?"

"Oh, a *nom de guerre*, of course; doubtless he is a political refugee. It is quite enough that Stewart Claverhouse introduced him. They are old friends, I believe. The count is a most fascinating man, a general favorite; there is certainly a great charm about him."

I moved away wondering. I could see nothing to fascinate about Guy de Cavagnac—no great charm; but I suppose there must have been, for society unquestionably indorsed the opinion. Nina, too, came gayly to me.

"There they are, Cas, talking to Theodora. I'm glad the count has come too; I like him."

"Do you, Nina? You didn't, though, when he beat us on the river," I added, lightly.

"Oh, but I was a child, and did not know him; besides, I did like him for handling his boat so perfectly. I wonder where he learned it."

"You had better ask, mademoiselle."

"I will, sir, if the fancy takes me. Here they come!" Dancing was beginning again as Theodora and her guests came up to us.

"Good-evening," said Nina, bending low; "was the opera perfect?"

Stewart answered her. "Perfect Weber gave it to the world, Miss Lennox, and to-night it was perfectly rendered."

"I wish I had been there, but Aunt Georgine would go to the concert. Casper, next opera night you will be good, and take me!"

I smiled, well pleased that they should see her affection and trust in me. Blind fool that I was, should not her very frankness have warned me? I am not the only one who has strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Oh, if we could sometimes go over our lives again; if we could sometimes retrace only one year, recall but one mistake, one wrong spoken word, one false step; if we could recall but one misspent moment of time, how many would stand where they do now? Should I be where I am now? Oh, mother, mother! if there is a God, will he lay the whole sin at my door?

I saw the dancers whirl past me, I heard the music and hum of voices near; but when I became again conscious of what was actually going on around, I perceived that the group had slightly altered. Theodora and another lady sat near me, and Cavagnac stood by them, talking in his quiet, softened tones that had in every inflection such an echo of the voice, that from first to last I could never hear without fascination—Stewart's.

I heard it now behind me, and glanced round. There he stood, erect, easy, graceful, with Nina leaning on his arm, and two or three men, eminent artists, standing about him. The first distinct words I heard were from one of these.

"Claverhouse, Lady Falconbridge told me something about a sculpture—a perfect masterpiece—which you brought over with you. I hope you are going to let us public see it?"

"It has left my studio," Stewart answered, with a half-smile; "it was executed to order, and is now in the owner's possession?"

"A real lover of Art, I hope, who will not shut up so priceless a treasure?"

"I know the owner most intimately," said Nina, her lips quivering with amusement, "and can assure you positively that any one can see it by giving their card. It is thrown open every Thursday, from ten to four."

"Quite right. No one has a right to hoard up either art, science, or literature. You have seen this sculpture, then, Miss Lennox? You can tell us who is the owner."

She broke into her rich, gleeful laugh, and bent low:

"Nina Lennox has the honor to be the owner of *Il gran' Maestro's* masterpiece, but you votaries of Art are welcome to see it whenever you will."

"We shall certainly avail ourselves of your kind invitation, Miss Lennox, to-morrow, if we may; at least, I will."

"Certainly. Ah, dancing is stopped; supper, I suppose."

There was a general move. The group broke up, and Stewart Claverhouse passed me, with Nina still leaning on his arm.

I drew back, setting my teeth hard, compressing my lips till the blood must have almost left them; but as I turned to follow the crowd, I looked up to meet Guy de Cavagnac's quiet, dark glance.

Curse him! curse him a thousand times!

CHAPTER VII.

TRACKED DOWN.

It had been gloomy and lowering all day, threatening, indeed, to close in a rain or thunder storm; for amid the sullen leaden gray of the clouds there was here and there that peculiar dusky reddish glow which in summer foretells the war of the elements. As it drew towards evening the clouds deepened in their murky tints, and gathered in a black mass through which the red still glowed, right over London. Those who thronged the streets glanced up, and hurried on their way to shelter of some kind; but the storm broke suddenly at last, as such storms generally do. There was a flash, a gleam, that for the hundredth part of a second illumined the darkened vault above, as if Heaven itself had flung wide its gates, that man might catch a glimpse of eternal light. There was a low roll of thunder, grand in its ominous majesty; then a crash, that seemed to rend the air and shake the very earth with its gigantic wrath. And then the heavens were opened, and like a deluge the rain fell; the streets, but a minute before so thronged, were deserted; the crowd vanished as by magic, where, it would have been hard to say; but one, a unit of the many, with a foreign face and

dress, hastily threw on a mantle she had hitherto carried carelessly, covering alike her picturesque garb and pretty box of wares; and with her dog sought shelter beneath a neighboring archway, the entrance to Mews, already pretty well filled with wayfarers, most of whom looked suspiciously on the wolf-hound, and some muttered anathemas on him. One man, evidently a foreigner, who wore a great loose coat and broad hat drawn low, touched the Provençale, and said in French,

"Mon enfant, is your dog quiet?"

The girl answered, "Oui, toujours," and turned directly to see the speaker. She knew the voice again, the figure, dress, the *tout ensemble*—the man who had bought the statuette of Il Angelo's "Madonna." Instinct, rather than any definite thought, made Anna de Laval try now to see his face, but the hat shadowed it. He evidently did not recognize her, though, as if glad of something to pass the time, he added, shuddering,

"A terrible storm. Are you afraid of a thunder-storm?"

"Non, monsieur; je l'aime bien."

"Diable! I don't! Ugh, look at the rain, enough to drown one. How these English live in such a climate je ne sais pas."

"Eh bien," said Anna, quietly; "and these English wonder how the French can live under the despotism of a republic."

"Diantre!" exclaimed the man, in a low, fierce undertone; "it shall a com— But what do *you* know about us? Where do you come from?"

"Rome, signor."

The man made no answer, only looked scowlingly out on the heavy rain. So did the child for some moments, and then a thought struck her.

"It is but weary work waiting for rain," she remarked. "Why does not monsieur enliven the time by smoking?"

"Ah, bon, bon, mon enfant."

Out came cigar and fusees, and Fleur-de-Marie gained her end. The light held to the cigar illumined for full a quarter of a minute the stranger's whole face. Anna's quiet, keen glance marked every feature, and printed them off on her mind with a secret smile. It was the living original of the miniature which Guido di Schiara had shown her. Come what would, when he left the archway she must follow him, track him down. She drew a little back into the gloom behind him, and leaned against the wall, patient, watchful, and motionless, looking at no one but him.

It had now fallen quite dark; but the rain pelted down ceaselessly for full twenty minutes, with frequent vivid flashes of lightning and heavy rolls of thunder. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the violence of the shower ceased, and it settled into a steady, hopeless, soaking rain, not heavy, but fine and penetrating. One by one those who had sought shelter left it to make the best of their way, wherever that was.

The stranger with a muttered curse on England and English climate, which it certainly deserved, left the archway. The cameo-

seller let him get a safe distance ahead, and then, like his ghost or shadow, followed him, utterly regardless of the rain. Corsare kept close at her side. But it was no easy chase; for the man, though he kept a swift and steady course, looked around and behind him continually in a nervous way, as if fearful of his shadow on the glistening pavement, as it shortened and lengthened between the lamp-posts. But for all that he never saw the slight, dark figure that was behind, sometimes quite close, and hidden by only a few people. Once, nothing hid her but the tall, stalwart form of a stately policeman.

So, as unerringly as a sleuth-hound, the Provençale tracked every step the man took—down Regent Street, Waterloo Place, and by Charles Street into the Haymarket, past the National Gallery into the Strand; and then he kept straight on, till near Somerset House he paused and entered a shop. Urged still by the now thoroughly aroused detective instinct rather than by connected thought, the cameo-seller hurried forward to see what the shop was, and what the man did there.

It was the gunsmith's, the name Stephen Hurne. She looked cautiously in through the window. The man, her chase, stood at the counter buying—what? She watched intently. He took up a very small, plainly finished revolver, examined it closely, laid down some money, put the weapon in his pocket, and turned to go. Anna-Marie drew back quickly, and the man passed out and resumed his swift way. The girl followed.

He kept on now without stopping into Fleet Street and up Ludgate Hill, but there he slackened speed, and turned up the Old Bailey. She was close behind him then, and kept tolerably near, under cover of the pelting rain and darkness; but in a minute or two the man turned into a narrow dark street, and vanished suddenly into one of the houses. The Provençale paused to mark the number of it, and then turned back into Ludgate Hill, shivering now, weary, chilled, cold, and wet; but she had only one thought, one face before her: she must make her way straight to Guido di Schiara; and the child patiently set her face westward, fatigue and cold and wet put aside for the time, scarcely felt at first. It was a very long way back to B—— Street, where, in a handsome set of chambers, Cavagnac had taken up his residence, and it was late when she reached the house and rang.

“Is the Count de Cavagnac within?”

The footman stared, evidently inclined to shut the door in her face; but the count had given positive commands that no one who asked for him should be turned away: if he were out, his own confidential servant was to be told. So the footman rang a bell that sounded somewhere above; for, evidently answering it, there came down a very quiet, very respectable man of about forty, dressed in black, a Frenchman, though his English was extremely good.

“You rang my bell, George?” he said.

“I did, Mounseer Auguste. Here's a girl asking for the count, but she didn't ought to see him, by her looks.”

M. Auguste turned his kind face to the child, and a smile came over it.

"Votre nom, c'est Anna, n'est ce pas, petite?" he said.

"Oui, monsieur."

"Bien, entrez, restez ici un moment."

Girl and dog passed into the hall, much to the disgust of George. Auguste vanished up-stairs, but in two minutes he came back.

"Follow me, petite, to Monsieur le Comte, and your dog too."

"We are so wet," said Anna, hesitating; "very wet."

"N'importe, pauvrete, venez."

The cameo-seller followed him up the wide staircase and along a corridor, where he opened a door, bade her enter, and closed it noiselessly behind her. It was a large, handsome room, brilliantly lighted, and on the hearth, before a bright blazing fire, stood Guido di Schiara's tall form, and Corsare bounded to him, while Anna paused.

"Come here, Anna, to me," said the count's soft voice. "Why, my child, you are wet—wet through—and your little hands are like ice," he said, taking them in his own warm hands; "you are shivering, Anna mia; you have surely never been out in this storm and rain?"

"Yes, monsieur, I could not help it. I have something to tell you."

"Not a word yet," said Cavagnac, ringing the bell.

"Corsare, lie down and dry, mon brave. Anna, give me your mantle."

But her slight fingers were too chilled, and the nerveless hands dropped. Cavagnac stooped, unfastened it, and took it off.

"Auguste," he said, as the attendant entered, "will you be kind enough to get this mantle dried, and bring me a small glass of hot brandy-and-water, and something to eat? This child is chilled through and through."

"Mais, monsieur, it is nothing," began Anna-Marie, as Auguste departed.

"Hush, ma chère enfant," said Cavagnac, smiling, as he laid his hand on her shoulder; "such a delicate Provence rose will not live in this cold England unless it is taken care of."

The Provençale trembled under his touch, the sensitive lip quivered; and, suddenly bowing her face, she burst into tears, not loud and noisy, but deep, heavy weeping, that shook her slender frame with its force.

Few men can see a woman weep unmoved, still less a young, fragile girl, almost a child in years, and Cavagnac's heart beat fast as it had never beat before.

"My child, you are over-weary."

"Monsieur, mille pardons, but—but I am a wanderer, and not used to such kindness," she whispered, brokenly.

Cavagnac could not speak for a minute for the strange, deep aching at his heart. He leaned against the mantle-piece, perfectly still, until he had mastered himself, while the wolf-hound put up his great shaggy head and licked his hand; and then Auguste came quietly in, set down a small salver, and retired as quietly.

"Drink this, Anna," said Cavagnac, offering her the glass; "it is not too hot—drink."

She drank it. If that hand had offered her poison she would almost have taken it; and then he made her eat, while he gave the dog sundry choice morsels, with an entire recklessness as to the handsome rug which would have horrified any house-keeper.

"Now your little hands are warm," he said, touching them, "and your lips have more color; that is right. You may now tell me what you came to say, mon enfant."

"Monsieur, I have found and tracked down Monsieur Louis Bonheur."

"You have? Anna, you are invaluable; you were born for a detective."

"As monsieur was. Will he hear the details?"

"Certainly, mon enfant."

In a few short words the cameo-seller told him the story, not, of course, forgetting the revolver.

The count listened in silence, and then said,

"To one so keen as you I need hardly ask if you noted the name of the shop?"

"Stephen Hurne, monsieur."

"And nearly opposite Somerset House?"

"Yes."

Cavagnac rang the bell, and Auguste came in, bringing Anna's mantle.

"Auguste, at nine o'clock to-morrow go into the Strand, and nearly opposite Somerset House you will see a gunsmith's named Stephen Hurne. About eight this evening Monsieur Louis Bonheur bought a very small pocket-revolver there; go in and ask for one exactly like it—your friend has shown you his, and you want its exact fellow—comprenez vous bien?"

"Oui, Monsieur le Comte." Auguste bowed and retired.

"He knows his business well," said Cavagnac, with a quiet smile, "and so do you, pretty one; so now for my part of the compact," and he put five sovereigns into her hand. "Keep your watch still. If you see him, track him, if with any one especially—"

"And if they part, monsieur, which am I to follow?"

"I must trust much to your own discretion, Anna. Follow whichever you think is going about the most important business; but those details I must leave to you."

"Merci, monsieur," said Anna-Marie, rising; "come, Corsare."

"Stay, ma chère Anna; if it rains you cannot go. I don't like letting you go alone so late at all."

"It is nothing, monsieur," interposed the Provençale, hastily. "I am used to it, and it does not rain now."

He looked at her a moment, and gave way, but he went down with her himself to the hall-door to make sure that the rain had really ceased; but when she had gone some little distance he took his felt hat and noiselessly followed her. He kept the slight figure that flitted on before him in sight till it vanished into the shelter of

the humble lodging she occupied. No harm could come to her while he was near her.

And then he returned to his own handsome rooms, but somehow the rooms seemed darker and very lonely. Where was the graceful form and soft Madonna face? Where was the sweet, plaintive voice that touched him as no face or voice had ever touched him before in all his changeful life? The room was void—the child was gone.

MANUSCRIPT XVI.

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT—A POISONOUS WORD.

I CAME in one morning, and, looking for Nina, found her in her boudoir before the easel, sketching rapidly, and only looking up now and then at her model, Anna de Laval.

“Busy as a bee,” said I, shutting the door.

I was welcomed with a bright “You, Cas? I’m glad you are back,” and a quiet, “Bon jour, monsieur,” from the cameo-seller.

What a beautiful couple they were. Each so patrician, each such a complete type of their race; and as I looked at them, I thought of Nina’s words only a week before. It did seem strange. There stood the two young girls, equally well born, equally beautiful, equally refined and sensitive in their delicate womanhood, and yet one had every luxury, friends and love, surrounding her; the other utterly homeless, friendless, a wanderer in the streets of a great city, exposed to insult, danger, and temptation.

The thought was before me when I caught Nina’s large, thoughtful blue eyes fixed on me, reading my face, for her glance went to the Provençale, and she shook her head sadly, but presently she asked her abruptly,

“Anna-Marie, is not your life very precarious?”

“Sometimes, mademoiselle.”

“Sometimes! it must be miserable! If you were sick and ill, what would become of you?”

“I might get through, or I might die, mademoiselle,” said the girl, with a quiet sadness that startled me. “It would not matter. I have no one who would care.”

“Not one, Anna? I know who would care.”

“Eh, mademoiselle?”

“For one, the maestro.”

“Ah, the Signor Angelo is so noble; he is too generous.”

“And I should care, Anna.”

“Mademoiselle!”

“Don’t you believe me?”

“But, mademoiselle, I am only a cameo-seller. You cannot care for me—a stranger.”

“Why not? the signor does, it seems.”

"Ah! Il Angelo. But I am no stranger to him," said the child.

Nina's pencil moved on silently, but I could see that she was struggling with strong feelings.

"I wish I was rich! Oh, I wish I was rich!" I heard her murmur.

I bent over her chair, and said, "Why that wish, Nina? you have carte-blanche."

"It is your money, Casper."

"Mine is yours, my dear child," said I, quietly.

"Not quite, Cas."

I stooped, and whispered in her ear, "Your pleasure is mine. Ask her what I know is in your heart: we can settle our score presently."

She glanced up at me with a half-tremulous smile.

"You are very kind, Cas."

But, for full ten minutes she worked in silence, while Anna's dark, dreamy eyes, though fixed on her dog, evidently saw scenes or faces far away. Whose? I wonder. She started at Nina's voice.

"Anna, if you were a peasant, I would ask you to be my attendant; being a lady as much as I am, that would not do. Yet I want to take you from your present life so much—oh, so much!—what can I do?"

The Provençale raised her large, mournful eyes with a look, a smile, so sad in its coldness and desolateness, that it pained me inexpressibly.

"Rien, mademoiselle."

"Anna, I am a woman like yourself; you can have no reason for refusing my friendship."

"Mademoiselle honors me; she follows her generous heart, and not her reason."

"I do. I will educate you for a governess, a singer, promote anything for which you have taste and talent. Is not that reason?"

I saw the Southron's brow flush darkly, then grow perfectly colorless, and her glance went straight from Nina to my face with a world of expression, part of which I am sure I read aright. I may have been mistaken, but I think not. The money, she knew, would come from me, and she would neither lay Nina nor herself under an obligation to me—to *me* she would owe nothing. Yet it was a tempting offer; to regain her lost position and lift her out of poverty and misery was not a chance that would occur again. But she refused it.

"Mademoiselle, I thank you a thousand times, but I cannot accept your goodness."

"Casper, isn't this child enough to provoke a saint?"

"Which you are not, mignonne," said I. "I suppose Anna-Marie knows her own affairs best."

Nina shook her head.

"But, Anna, you take no time to consider; you cannot *like* your wandering, precarious life."

"It has its charms, too, mademoiselle, in its very change."

"An evasive answer," said I. "Are you too proud to accept favor from any one, Anna?"

"Non, monsieur; one could not go through life like that," she answered, giving me a keen look.

Wrongly or rightly, I again interpreted it, "It is you and your money that I refuse," and it stung me, I hardly knew why—stung me into something of a sneer.

"Yet you act against your words, Marie; if your friend the maestro were to make you the same offer as Miss Lennox, would you refuse it?"

I shall never forget the look that girl gave me, the proud lip quivering, the delicate nostrils distended; yet, impulsive Southron as she was, she answered calmly, though I felt her contempt in every quiet cadence:

"Monsieur may like to know that before he left Rome the Signor Angelo offered to do for Anna de Laval all that a noble, high-souled man could do for a poor friendless wanderer."

"And you *refused*?" exclaimed impetuous Nina.

"I refused. Not, monsieur"—turning again to me—"because I was too proud, but because I already owed him a greater debt of kindness than I could or can ever repay."

"You must be very clever," said Nina, "to have made him accept your refusal."

How the girl's mobile face changed again in answering Nina. "I only did it, mademoiselle, by giving a promise with it."

"And that was—"

"To claim of him the assistance I then rejected at no distant day."

"By which he meant soon?"

"No, signorina; it might be two, three, or four years. The gran' Dio may send that I shall never have to claim his generosity."

I saw by Nina's smile that she understood the girl's feelings and high-wrought delicacy, but I did not. It seemed to me absurd, over-fine drawn, and unnecessary, save for a reason which, though obvious to me, did not seem to have influenced her. I spoke out:

"Why, in the name of sense, Anna, you should not I can't see, except for a worldly reason, which does not seem to have influenced either you or the maestro—he in his offer, and you in your refusal—I mean, the almost impossibility of escaping the world's misinterpretation and evil judgment."

"Monsieur, firstly, the world would have known nothing of it; and if it did, Il Angelo stands in his high integrity above its evil judgment, and I below it. Neither of us care for it."

Nina lifted her sweet face to mine, and said, simply, "'To the pure all things are pure.'"

For one second something in me seemed to stand still. I felt mentally as if I had received a stab, and I was conscious, darkly, of a vague, miserable sense of inferiority; of something, beautiful and high, from which I was shut out forever, though even this cameo-seller lived within its halo and breathed its atmosphere. I crushed down the feeling, and restraining a more scoffing answer, said,

"That is an easy and false sophistry; not true in the world, and impossible to act upon."

Nina I saw was too pained to answer, but the Provençale said,

"Monsieur is, then, wiser than God; the eyes of his soul see further than the Deity into the truth."

"Indeed, bell' Anna," said I, lightly, "I'm not going to argue now as I did in Rome; I'm too lazy; so bon jour."

I went to my study and smoked, but the words haunted me; they were always coming across me.

"Deity, soul, truth. What is truth?"

I turned restlessly, and bent over an open book on the table; but I started as my glance fell on Plato's words—

"Truth is the body of the Deity, and light His shadow."

There was a pencil-note in the margin:

"This classic philosopher was, it seems, as weakly credulous as learned moderns, who, at least, should be more enlightened. It is degrading to see man deliver up his intellect a slave to such an empty farce, a vain foolery, the offspring of a few disordered fancies."

I knew my mother's writing, and shut the book with a smile.

"Yes, right; wonderful credulity, gigantic slavery," I murmured.

I look back now to that moment, and all is horror and darkness. There is no hope, unless there is oblivion; for if not—*if not*, was not mine the wonderful credulity, mine the gigantic slavery? and will not mine be the eternal damnation?

MANUSCRIPT XVII.

MY MOTHER LIFTS A VEIL UNCONSCIOUSLY.

IF I had wished to avoid Stewart Claverhouse I should have found it impossible as long as we were in the same city, for everywhere I went I met him; the great sculptor was *fêted* and welcomed everywhere. Sometimes Dr. John was with him, but he was not young, and preferred quiet; but the Count de Cavagnac was constantly with him, both at home and abroad.

"I don't like that Cavagnac, mother," I said to her one day, "and I can't see what Claverhouse finds in him so fascinating."

"His taste is not singular, my dear boy. He is a general favorite; personally, I think him a most fascinating man; so does Nina."

"You women are taken by his handsome face."

"I am not, and certainly Nina is not, as you know, Cas. He is a singular man. I should like to know his history, and who he really is. Have you ever asked Claverhouse?"

"I! no, indeed; I might as well ask one of his own statues, for I should get about as much out of it."

"He looks it," laughed Georgine. "I wonder he has never married."

Why, indeed? I had often asked myself that question of late, with restless uneasiness; but I answered carelessly,

"Oh, I suppose, artist-like, he has created an artist ideal, the reality of which has no existence in life."

"I don't know that," said my mother. "I called the other day to return the doctor a book he lent Nina, and he—Doctor John—showed me the portrait of Mrs. Claverhouse. Have you seen it?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, in his own mother Stewart Claverhouse had a living ideal."

"In face, but what of character and intellect?" said I.

"They matched the face, if Doctor John spoke truth; she must have been possessed of the same magic charm as her gifted son. Casper, was he an only child?"

"No, there were three others, but they died."

"The poor mother! were they sons or daughters?"

"I don't know; but they died in infancy or early childhood, for Stewart cannot remember them."

"And the father?"

"I don't know anything of him, but Stewart once showed me his miniature."

"Was he handsome?"

"Very; but a stern—I should say a broken—man. I always thought it very singular, the way he sent his only child to be brought up abroad."

"Very; it could not be for cheapness, I suppose?"

"Oh no, for he was wealthy and free-handed. He spared no expense on Stewart, and I know he had an almost unlimited command of money."

"Casper, haven't you ever wished to be as famous as he is?" said my mother, suddenly.

I started, but answered with a careless laugh,

"No; it's too much trouble, mother."

"There's no fame without it, though."

"Precisely; therefore, fame and I are strangers. I hate exertion and work. I am not ambitious."

"And the sculptor is both laborious and ambitious?"

"Well, of course all are not born alike," said I, yawning; "and you know, lady mother, that we of creole blood were never famous for an overplus of energy."

My mother was leaning negligently back in a low American chair with a French novel held between her fingers. She dropped it on her lap, and said,

"I wish you would have the energy to choose a wife—to fall in love, as the phrase goes."

Again I started. She did not know how nearly she had hit me. I hardly knew it myself at first, but I laughed.

"Why, mother, do you want to get rid of me? Have Walter or Theodora put it into your head?"

"No; but it came across me the other night at their ball, when

you were laughing and chatting with the Countess of Laneton's pretty daughter, Lady Maude Cleves."

I drew a deep breath of relief, for I had feared something else nearer home.

"Did it? are you turning match-maker? Why, my old school-mate, dashing Tom Dacre, is her favorite slave, I fancied."

"What if he is?" said Georgine, impetuously; "you are surely more than fit to enter the lists! Haven't you the energy to win the girl you love from any rival under the sun?"

"By Jove! yes," said I, almost passionately. "Where I love, no rival shall pass me by."

Georgine looked at me, puzzled.

"Do you love, Casper, or have you frittered away your affections on worthless objects?"

"No, mother, I have not; but when I marry, when I love, it will not be Lady Maude Cleves."

"Who then, Casper?"

"I'll tell you when I have found my Eurydice," I answered, as I left the room.

So the mask fell from my own eyes, and showed me plainly as noonday what had been before only vaguely felt. I did love with a love that had in a few months sprung into a strong vivid life, that like a tornado must sweep all before it.

It seems so long ago now, such an immeasurable distance of time, that it might be a hundred years for all my sense of it. Oh, Nina, Nina, looking at me through the heavy gloom with those soul-lit, sorrowful eyes, can I *now* dare to call by the holy name of love the fierce, selfish, wild passion which possessed me like a devil?

Oh, for one moment free from remorse and despair! Oh, for the power to undo the past!

CHAPTER VIII.

MORNING GOSSIP.

"WERE any of you at the opera last night?" asked one of a group of young men who were lounging one morning at their club, enjoying cigars, gossip, and the papers.

Two or three answered, "Yes; why did he ask?"

"Only because I saw a strange face since my month's trip! Who is that striking-looking foreigner who was in Lady Falconbridge's box, with her and Lady Maude Cleves?—some adventurer, eh?"

"Don't know, and don't care," one answered. "He was out in the Park yesterday, riding a splendid chestnut."

"Who's that?" demanded a young guardsman, lounging up.

"Who are you fellows talking of?"

"That *distingué*-looking foreigner."

“Oh, that man. Here, Tom Dacre, here’s Herbert asking about Guy de Cavagnac.”

A fine, elegant-looking young man, with a clear, bright eye, joined the group.

“Herbert asking about him, eh?”

“Yes; who and what is he?”

“I don’t know. Cavagnac isn’t his real name, for he is an Italian, the bosom friend of Stewart Claverhouse, whose introduction is, of course, sufficient passport. The count is a capital fellow; by the way, I met him last night at F——’s.”

“Oh, he patronizes F——’s, does he?” cried Herbert, laughing; “plays, I suppose, like the deuce, or a Neapolitan?”

“Don’t you believe it,” said Dacre; “he’s got his wits about him, I tell you. I don’t believe a Parisian Greek would come over him. Wardour tried hard to make him play deep, but it was no go; my nabs laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and turned on his heel. Wolfgang left the table at the same time.”

“Oh, was he there?” said the young guardsman. “I thought he had pulled up, Tom?”

“So he has. Oh, he draws it mild now; but, by Jove! he went the pace at college, and after it, too; took devilish good care that his mother and guardian didn’t ever know the half.”

“How the deuce he managed to pay up without a split I never could tell,” said Herbert. “I was quite moderate to him, but I had an awful blow-up with my governor; so, how Wolfgang was so clever caps me.”

“Don’t you know?” said Tom, laughing. “It wasn’t so bad, either. He got the fellows here to give him a little time, and he went to Baden, then to Paris; he had luck at play, and in the long-run won heavily at ——’s, in Paris; he broke the banks. That’s how he cleared himself.”

“Ha, ha! did he play fair always?”

“For shame! yes.”

“Where did you hear it?” asked one, “for I never heard you mention it before.”

“I only heard it recently myself, my dear fellow. I was told by this very Cavagnac, who was in Paris at the time, and—”

“Hush! there he is himself, coming in.”

“Of course you have heard the news?” said Cavagnac, entering with a general salute to the group.

“No; what?”

“Perchè! has not Monsieur Dacre told you, or the journals?”

“We were talking, and Tom has told us nothing,” said the guardsman. “What is the news?”

“The Ministry was defeated last night by a large majority, and must either resign or dissolve.”

“Oh, we know that; is that all?”

“No; there has been a Cabinet Council already; and as I came along I heard that they were going to the country.”

“Trust the Radicals for holding on,” said Tom Dacre. “The

country won't have them; but they never know how to retire with flying colors, and will end as before in ignominious flight."

"Oh, be hanged to them; don't let's prose into politics," cried a deprecating voice; but another said, yawning,

"What's the difference between politics and policy? the last is the carrying out of the first, I should say."

"I think," said Cavagnac, "that your own Bulwer defines them well: 'Politics is the art of being wise for others, policy the art of being wise for one's self.'"

"Very good; but, I say, Cavagnac, where did you hear that a dissolution was decided on?"

"From Claverhouse; I met him."

"Ah, he knows some of the fellows in official quarters," said Tom.

"Just like those Rads; got the cheek of a highwayman's donkey."

There was a laugh, and then the young men, Italian and Englishmen alike, plunged into politics, the pet subject of Englishmen, and as certain to be heard where any number of them are gathered together as any religious subject is certain *not* to be heard in any Parisian salon.

MANUSCRIPT XVIII.

SINKING.

I LOVED Nina Lennox, and mine only she must be, come what would; but when I would have taken a step to win her, to bind her to me, something seemed to hold me back and make me guard my secret still. What was that something? Was it that her purity stood between her and the deadly blight of my dark and scoffing Atheism? or was it an instinct which, disguise it as I would, told me in my secret heart that her affection for me could never change its character; nay, more, that from her childhood upward there had ever been between us the same fearful nightmare, want of something that had made me demand of Stewart in desperation, "*What is it?*" If I had asked her the same question, would she have given the same incomprehensible answer, "You want soul?" I grew restless and uneasy, and could not bear her long out of my sight. I dreaded a rival; I feared I knew not what. I fretted if she did not come about me. I chafed equally at the very frankness of her affection more than at a new name she had lately given me. One sitting, sauntering in, I heard her tell Anna de Provence, "Monsieur Casper is my frère adopté." And after that she called me often "mon frère."

Why did I fear rivalry? Did I feel myself inferior to the men with whom she came in contact? No. I held myself proudly the equal, of many the superior. Theirs was not the opposing influence I feared. I smiled at the mere thought that any of them could stand for a moment in my path. What, who did, then?

The serpent who had lain so many long years within me in uneasy slumber began now to uncoil and rear its hideous head and deadly form in monstrous life and strength. As a bank of black clouds gathers densely and stormily, so it now gathered up in one dense black mass, the deadly jealousy and hatred of years which had crept into my heart's core almost from the first hour I saw him, the instinctive dislike and dread and antagonism of evil to good. The sculptor was the man whom I felt stood between me and my end; yet I was torn by doubts that tortured me between hopes and fears. Why had he remembered her so well; remembered a promise and fulfilled it, though to do so had cost him months of labor? Why had he never married? But he had only smiled and laughingly retorted the question when I had asked "what charm he had carried about him?" Was the charm that memory? Impossible, absurd nonsense of my passionate brain. He was a mere boy then, and she a child.

I had perhaps, after all, made a rival where none existed. Watch as I would, I could not detect that he sought her out in any marked manner. In society he gave her only the same courteous attention which he gave to any other young and beautiful woman; but then I knew that if he did love her, his very love, in the chivalrous delicacy of his noble nature, would make him shelter her from the notice which so wounds a true woman's sensitive purity. I knew that he met her often at my brother's house, for they lived near us, and Nina was never two days without being some time or other with Theodora, when I could not be with her without the betrayal of an espionage which would have lost all. And Stewart was often there, always welcomed. Was it possible for a man like him to be often in the society of a being so gifted as Nina—a being in such perfect and exquisite harmony with every throb of his own existence—and not love her; ay, I can confess it now, such love as he could give, but of which I was utterly incapable? Mine dragged me down, down into hell, his lifted him above the earth; mine came and possessed me like a devil, his came and dwelt in him as an angel; mine was accursed, his was holy. . . .

Nina's heart, I felt sure, was still free, for I believed it impossible for a girl so young as she to love and not know it, and knowing it, she must betray it to one who watched her as I did. No change of feature or voice, no quiver of an eyelid, could have escaped me.

Sitting where I do now, and looking back, I wonder sadly at my blindness.

One day, to escape thought, if possible, I sauntered into the Park, but it was crowded, and I was in no humor for encountering any one I knew. I wandered along the Serpentine into Kensington Gardens, and at last stopped near one of the rhododendron beds to light a cigar. As I did so, I noticed some one sitting on the other side of the flower-bed. I knew the figure, the dress, the very droop of the graceful head; how had Anna-Marie come there? I stood where I was, putting out the cigar, and even placing myself where,

while seeing and able to hear her, she could not see me even by turning round.

Her dog was with her, for though I could not see him, I heard her talking to him once; but as she did so, I heard a step coming towards the spot, and saw a figure. So did Anna, for she looked up. The next moment she rose quickly, with a deep reverential salute to the stranger, and my lips curled as I saw that he was a priest. He was as unmistakably a gentleman, a dignified, handsome man of fifty or so, with a face which, in its mixture of benignity, firmness, and grace, reminded me of Doctor John. He bowed, giving her a kind "Good-morning" as he passed, but suddenly something, perhaps the sad beauty of the young face, seemed to strike him, and he turned back, and addressed her in French:

"My child, by your dress and face, you come from Italy. What have you in that pretty box?"

He had a fine, rich voice; very pleasant in its modulations, vigorous and full, a strange contrast to the child's plaintive, languid accents.

"I have statuettes, Monsieur le Prêtre, and camei, and a few photographs; les voici."

"And is that fine dog yours?" he asked, as he looked at her wares.

"Sì, Signor Padre."

"You have some good photographs here," he observed. "Some I recognize from engravings of them — ah, yes, the 'Fiora,' and 'Poet's Dream;' why" — I saw him look at Anna-Marie in surprise — "*you* are the original—"

"A votre service mille fois, monsieur."

He smiled a little, but took up another. "How lovely! how perfect! what is it?"

"Monsieur, it is Il Angelo's last and most wonderful work, 'The Wreck.'"

"That every one is talking of? Ah, how I wish I could see the original," said the stranger.

"Monsieur can do so easily. It is on view every Thursday."

"Is it? Can you tell me where?"

"At No. 12 — Street. If monsieur presents his card he will be admitted."

"Perhaps, my child, you can tell me who owns this great sculpture."

"Mademoiselle Lennox, monsieur."

"Merci, petite. I will buy this one. Can you speak English?"

"Fairly well, monsieur," said Anna, smiling; "but I have not been long in England."

"I hope those who own you are kind to you, pretty one?"

"I am free, monsieur. I am alone in the world."

"You—so young, so delicate, and—have you no friends?"

"None, monsieur, but the maestro, and—the gran' Dio."

"Ah, humanity, humanity, ever putting the visible created before the Invisible Creator," said the stranger, shaking his head; then, touching the large black cross she wore, he added,

"You are, I see, a Catholic."

I laughed to myself as I saw, and heard her answer, the ever-ready expressive shrug of the shoulders, the half-smile and quiet, "Oui, monsieur."

"God keep you from temptation, my child!" he said, earnestly. "Oh, it grieves me, it grieves me! all these miseries that I cannot help. All I can do is scarcely a drop in the ocean," he said, more to himself than her.

"Monsieur, but Jesus Christ commended the widow's mite more than the rich man's thousands."

Softly as she spoke, I heard every word, and a shiver ran through me, though I did not understand her allusion; but he did, for he thanked her, and bidding "God keep her," went on his way.

I, too, stole away. "God" again! I hated the very word, for it was a bond between Claverhouse and Nina which I could never have.

Who was this stranger? Should I ever see him again?

MANUSCRIPT XIX.

DR. HARRINGTON.

It was, if I remember rightly, the day after I had seen Anna de Laval and the stranger, that about ten o'clock Stewart Claverhouse's groom brought me a note from his master, but did not wait for an answer. It needed none, save my own appearance, for it was only a line or two, asking me to dinner that evening, to meet a small party, some of whom were old acquaintance.

I sat with the note in my hand--shall I say thinking? for the feelings that surged in my brain were not thought.

Should I go? what use to refuse? I could not habitually avoid him, and yet how I dreaded his presence! because I dreaded, hated to feel that in his presence I was utterly powerless to withstand the influence of the subtle charm, the incomprehensible fascination which I could only shake off when away from him. Near him, the very struggle to resist and case myself against that power was torture; away from him, it was little less suffering to give full rein to my dark passions.

I knew, too, that I was sure to meet Guy de Cavagnac in Stewart's house, and that man I hated as one can only hate a being who, one feels, reads your very heart, and feared him as one only can fear a sure and adverse fate. And such to me was Guy de Cavagnac.

Besides, if he could, I never could forget how he had twice humbled, outwitted me, defied me, and wounded my vanity, years ago, on the river; and again, not two months ago, when I went down to see my brother at Dover; besides feeling, whenever I encountered him, that I was in no way his match. Strange that, though his voice, accent, his very intonation, was to my ear so like Stewart's, it rarely

failed to ruffle me; his hand, so like Stewart's in its singular beauty, I could not bear to touch me, while Stewart's voice and touch soothed me.

I would face them all. Why should I shrink like a coward? And I went.

When I entered the drawing-room I found the guests already there. The party made only ten in all—Claverhouse, Dr. Fantony, the Count de Cavagnac (of course), two old school-fellows—Tom Dacre and Gus Seymour, now a rising barrister—myself, the Earl of Laneton, my brother Walter, the eminent artist, M——, and a stranger—the stranger of the Gardens. Claverhouse at once introduced me.

“Let me introduce to you another old pupil of my uncle's. Mr. St. Leger Von Wolfgang, the Rev. Dr. Harrington—an old friend, Casper, of Doctor John's.”

“Whom,” said I, as I bowed, “I have had the pleasure of seeing before.”

“Indeed!” said Dr. Harrington, with a grave smile. “I am not aware that I have ever seen you, Mr. Von Wolfgang.”

“Were you not in Kensington Gardens yesterday, Dr. Harrington, talking to a very beautiful, high-born-looking Roman cameo-seller? Passing some way off, I saw you—at least I think I am not mistaken.”

“No,” said he. “It was I. I did speak to such a child—a most singular child.”

“She is very singular; an old *protégée* of Claverhouse. I suppose, Dr. Harrington, you recognized in her the original of some of his most exquisite works?”

“Directly. No one could miss the likeness who had seen even good engravings. She told me how I could see his last great work, ‘The Wreck.’ It must be wonderful, even judging it by a photograph. The original of the dog I see in *Fidelio* there on the rug; but where did he, I wonder, find one for that most perfect of all the faultless group, the one living figure?”

“You have asked the right person, monsieur,” said Cavagnac, sauntering up; “the original is his own cousin, Mademoiselle Lennox, though Claverhouse did it from memory.”

“Indeed!” he answered, and I turned away, biting my lips.

“Who is Dr. Harrington, Stewart?” I asked him, aside.

“He is an old friend of Doctor John's and mine. The church is ours, St. Augustine's, — Street. Your cousin knows him. He is a noble-hearted man, very clever and energetic, as much born for a priest as some are born lawyers or politicians.”

“Or sculptors, or idlers like me,” added I, laughing. “I was born to idleness, I believe.”

“No man was born to idleness in this working world,” said the sculptor, gravely. “God never gave man brain and soul to waste in idleness.”

I was spared an answer by the announcement of dinner, and we went down.

At table I was placed between Seymour and Dr. Harrington, who was on Stewart's left, Lord Laneton being on his right. To my annoyance, my *vis-à-vis* was the Italian, the very last person I would have wished to be there.

With so select a party the conversation was almost naturally general, and it flowed first upon politics. What wonder, when all save the count were Englishmen, three of whom at least were active and influential politicians, to wit, the Earl of Laneton, Falconbridge, and Tom Dacre? So the recent defeat of the Ministry and their appeal to the country was discussed and canvassed, and the pros and cons as to whether the new House, when met, would be any more favorable to the Ministers than its predecessors.

"I would lay any bet," said Tom, "that so far from gaining a majority, they'll lose some of their minority."

"So you say," remarked Gus Seymour, laughing, "and it is very likely; and still I should like to be heard on the other side, as the old lawyer said."

"What is that, Gus?" said Doctor John; "let's have the story."

"Why, sir, saving Dr. Harrington's presence, it is of an old lawyer who, one Sunday in church, heard a very eloquent sermon, but in which the preacher spared no pains to paint the devil in his very blackest colors. 'Capital speech,' whispers the lawyer to his friend—'capital,' but I should like to be heard on the other side."

There was a general laugh at Seymour's story, and Claverhouse said, "I think that 'the other side' is never in want of defence. It is a case in which there are many more defendants than plaintiffs."

"That is too true," said Dr. Harrington. "You lawyers," he added, addressing Seymour, "must, I think, be often placed in very painful positions. When you are retained for a criminal whom you believe guilty, how can you conscientiously defend him?"

"You forget, doctor, that in English law and justice no man is a *criminal* until that of which he is accused is proved in open trial: the counsel has no right to judge his client guilty."

"But a man cannot avoid or prevent secret conviction or opinion."

"A legal mind can, by nature or habit, hold itself unbiassed, and look at a case in a purely legal point," answered Seymour.

"Well, but suppose the prisoner—and it has been done—confesses his crime to his counsel, of course he must then throw up his brief?"

"Certainly not! such a thing is rarely heard of. If the accused confesses his guilt to his counsel, he has still the right to be defended on his trial; the counsel may, with clear conscience—nay, his plain duty is to see that his client has a fair trial, and is only condemned strictly under and according to law."

"I understand you; but still the confession must place you in a painful and false position."

"Yes, so far; and it is, I think, foolish of any prisoner to confess to his counsel if he means to plead 'Not guilty;' his attorney is, of course, very different."

"Very few confess," remarked Lord Laneton, "if statistics are to be believed."

"No, Lord Laneton; but then statistics cannot well reach the private confessions that prisoners may make to their attorneys."

"I wonder," said my brother, "how many condemned men think that they have been fairly tried and sentenced?"

"Very few, of course."

"And sometimes," said Stewart, "justice would demand a new trial; that is where your English jurisprudence, much and rightly boasted, is far inferior to foreign law: you want a Cour de Cassation—an Appeal Court."

"And have every criminal appealing?" said I.

"Point de tout, mon ami. It answers in France and Italy; why not in England? By what right or justice is a man accused of crime denied the right which is granted in civil cases? If a man is non-suited about his property, he can appeal; but if his life be in question, he has no second chance: if new evidence be found after condemnation, there is only a roundabout way open to him. The question has been mooted for a long time, but, as the English usually do, it will be, I suppose, talked of for twenty years before anything is done."

"Ay," laughed Cavagnac, "the English look a long time before they leap."

"And you foreigners," retorted the earl, "leap before you look: ours, at least, is the safest way."

"I don't know that; we might go faster with great advantage," said Claverhouse: "we have to endure an evil a long time before we get a remedy—it runs through everything."

"Ah, well, well, my dear Claverhouse, we manage, in spite of all, to be the first nation in the world."

Stewart laughed, and Tom Dacre said to me, "You should stand for Parliament, Wolfgang. I could get you in for a Conservative borough."

"Too much trouble, Dacre; I could never face it. As I told Claverhouse, I was born for idleness."

I saw Dr. Harrington glance at me and half shake his head, but he said nothing then. Afterwards, in the drawing-room, he came up to me with his coffee-cup in his hand.

"Mr. Wolfgang, do you think any man is born for idleness?" he said, in his grave, kind manner.

"It is a fair inference, doctor, when fortune has already spared the necessity for labor by giving fortune, position—all, in fine, that men work for."

"And what, then, of the men in this room—types of many—for what have they worked?"

"They? oh, for fame, because they are so distressingly energetic or ambitious, or both, that they can't enjoy in content the goods that chance has given them. Well, they were born for working bees; I, and such as I, born to all that I want, and without the curse of a restless ambition and energy, were, I may consider, justly born to do nothing."

"If, my young friend, you had been born an idiot, or so nearly

one as to be almost as irresponsible, you might with some reason suppose that you were not meant for the active works of life, but you are intrusted not only with fortune, but with talents. Do you think they are meant to rust? No! God has unmistakably declared that every talent, every good, is but lent; a gift, given only on condition that it is used. Our Lord's parable of the talents is a sufficiently plain command in itself."

He paused, but I merely bowed, as if politely waiting for him to go on. Somehow, I dared not avow that I did not know to what parable he alluded.

He added, "Look at your brother and Mr. Dacre, with political talent; Mr. Seymour, with legal talent; Claverhouse, gifted with such marked talent for art; can you say that they would not be very wrong to enjoy their wealth in idleness, and let those talents rust?"

"I don't see why they should not, doctor, save that, as I said, they are cursed with ambition."

"Ambition is only a curse when men make it so by giving it no limit; like all other gifts, it must be bounded, for St. Paul says, 'Be temperate in all things;' but it was given as a blessing: the want of it is a curse, if anything. God gives talents to be used, and to him we are responsible for them."

A soft voice, that made me start and shiver as if there had been poison in its musical cadence, said quietly, "Monsieur, you are arguing at a disadvantage."

"How, count?"

"Because Monsieur Von Wolfgang denies your authority and the responsibility you would impose."

"How do you mean, count? I don't quite take your jest," said Dr. Harrington.

"Faith, no jest, doctor—is it, Monsieur Casper? You are something very near an atheist."

I could have struck him where he stood, but I bowed, answering Dr. Harrington's look of grieved surprise.

"I certainly cannot satisfy my reason with what most men seem to believe so easily—credulously, it seems to me."

Dr. Harrington shook his gray head and looked down—it seemed to me too deeply grieved to speak—but the next moment he lifted his eyes and asked me, suddenly, "Were you ever at a death-bed?"

I never had been, for death was horrible to me—a grim thing, which I avoided.

"No, sir; never."

"It is a pity. You would hardly, at your age, have remained an obdurate infidel, for the death-bed of a believer might have softened you, that of an atheist startled you at least to inquiry and search. I know nothing more terrible in my long experience than the death-bed of an atheist."

He crossed the room, and I too turned away, glancing at Cavagnac. The ironical smile had left the delicate lip, the dark face was very grave, and he moved away silently to where Stewart stood for a

minute apart, in a bow-window. Two steps, and I was near the curtain of it. I saw him lay his hand on the sculptor's shoulder.

"Angelo, Angelo, which after all will have the heaviest account—Wolfgang, who scoffs at and denies the living God, or I, who, admitting him on the lip, have denied him in my life?"

The sculptor's answer was in Italian, and I left my place.

"Which will have the heaviest account?" What and who, then, was this so-called Guy de Cavagnac?

CHAPTER IX.

FLEUR-DE-MARIE ANSWERS TWO OR THREE QUESTIONS.

ONE gloomy, lowering evening the cameo-seller was returning homeward, weary and dispirited, less in body than mind, her dog at her side, walking with drooping head and gait, and when she paused at a crossing he would lick her hand.

The narrow street in which she lodged was but a short way from the Marble Arch. As she entered it, she saw a tall, dark figure walking slowly up and down, but the moment she drew nearer it came on swiftly, up to her.

"Monsieur—"

"Tiens toi, ma chère," said Cavagnac, laying his hand on her shoulder, and gently turning her back; "come with me a little way, if you are not too weary."

Not weary now. His touch, his voice, his presence banished weariness, and she turned back with him into the Edgeware Road, across through the Marble Arch into the Park.

"I have been waiting for a long time for you, Anna-Marie—fully an hour, I think."

"J'en suis très fâchée, monsieur."

"N'importe. You have seen no more of Louis Bonheur, I suppose, or I should have seen you?"

"Nothing much, monsieur; only this evening, as I was passing V——g's, in Regent Street, I saw him inside."

"Was he alone?"

"I do not know exactly, monsieur, for the shop was full; but I saw him address several remarks to Monsieur Von Wolfgang, who was there also."

"Ah, diable!" said the detective, quick and suspicious directly. "But he can have nothing to do with any plots. Did they have the air of confrères?"

"No; I fancied that Monsieur Casper seemed surprised at being accosted; he eyed him as one does a new face and figure."

"Had Monsieur Casper no companion, male or female?"

"Not that I could perceive, monsieur."

"You tried to see, then, Anna?"

"Monsieur told me to take note of him whenever I could, because he is the maestro's enemy."

"You are an invaluable friend, caralina. Well, it is of him I want to speak, but you must answer me candidly."

"If I can, Monsieur Guy; if I am able."

"You must be able; if not, you must find out," he said, again laying his light, but now slightly imperative, hand on her shoulder. "You still sit to Mademoiselle Lennox. Is her cousin often present?"

"Yes, he always comes in."

"Which you don't like, eh? you are not in love with him?"

The Provençale half laughed, and colored.

"Je ne l'aime point," she said, very decidedly, "but I like him to come in."

"Ah, woman! to tease him. He hates sarcasm. Now tell me. You are a woman, and very quick. His cousin is very fond of him, isn't she?"

Cavagnac felt the girl start under his hand, but she answered,

"Yes, very fond of him; but only at the last sitting she told me that he was completely 'son frère adopté.'"

"Son frère, eh? I thought so," muttered Guido between his teeth.

"Then he never shall have her, Anna mia."

"Signor!"

"Was he in the room when she said that?"

"Yes; he did not like it."

"Ha! By what do you judge?"

"I saw his face, monsieur, and he left the room."

"We men must be sharp indeed to escape such eyes as yours," said the Italian, half smiling.

"Monsieur Casper's face and his control of it are not like yours, monsieur: the first is not difficult to read, the last rather readily gives way."

"Tell me, Anna; does he love his cousin—you understand me?"

"Yes, monsieur, as much as he can; he might have spared himself the trouble."

Cavagnac drew a deep breath of relief.

"You think so, Anna? that she does not and never will love him?"

"I know it, monsieur. It is impossible that she could love such a man; there can be no *rapprochement* between them. Monsieur Casper has no soul."

"Strange how that strikes all who come in contact with him," said Guido di Schiara. "Il Angelo used those very words to me: it is true—Casper is soulless."

He turned back, and added, "You told me that the Signorina Nina wanted to take you from this life, and you refused, because the money, you knew, was Monsieur Casper's—and I understand it."

"He thought her romantic, high-flown, absurd," said Anna de Laval; "he could not conceal it from me."

"Yet he wished her to be pleased, though it were an expensive Quixoticism?"

"Yes; he is free enough with his money, monsieur."

"He is. Anna, have you given me every reason for your refusal?"

The Provençale looked down, and her lips trembled.

"Monsieur, I promised the maestro that I would go to him."

"Yet you refused him, and obtained grace for two or three years?"

"Ah, mais, monsieur," said the pleading, plaintive voice.

"I understand you perfectly, my child; yet forgive me again. Anna, why not go now?"

"No, not now, not yet," she said, with a quick, energetic utterance, very different to her habitual languid cadence.

"Anna-Marie, you have some reasons—tell them me."

"Monsieur, one is real, the other fancy or fanciful."

"Never mind—tell me, my child."

"Les voici; Monsieur Casper is a secret enemy of Il Angelo. You have bidden me keep him under a sort of surveillance, and I cannot do that so well in a higher as in this humble position; to serve the signor I would give my life."

"I know it, child. Oh, woman, woman, how cruelly we men ill-use and abuse your devotion! Anna, tell me your other reason."

"I could not serve monsieur any more," said the Provençale, simply.

"Again, again," he murmured. "Anna, dismiss that, let it go for nothing; but the other keep to, for I tell you there is in me a dark presentiment—the offspring of my great love for Angelo—that Wolfgang will be to him as an evil spirit, and that we who love the maestro will be needed in a heavy hour of trouble. From the first moment I saw that Wolfgang I felt for him one of those strong antipathies in which I have never been mistaken. Now, here we are again at the Arch. Have you money?"

"Yes, monsieur, thank you."

"Adio, caralina, à rivederlâ."

They parted, and each went a separate way.

Strange how Guido again missed the child's face and presence. There was something wanting now—a void he dared not, would not, analyze.

MANUSCRIPT XX.

FALSE STEPS.

Do you wonder why, in all my distracting doubts about Nina, I never made a confidante of my mother, never told her my secret and my misery, never asked her the questions which only a woman could answer, and which I longed, oh, how I longed! to ask a woman—one who was soft and womanly, unlike my mother?

One drawing morning Nina had gone out to see Theodora, and was not yet back when her model came. Her lady's-maid came to ask me "if the young girl was to wait?"

"Of course; let her go up to the boudoir. Miss Nina won't be long."

And I went on smoking and reading for a few minutes, till it struck me that a chat with Anna de Laval would be preferable, and then I went up to the boudoir

The cameo-seller was standing before a very fine steel engraving of the Last Judgment, but she turned as I entered.

"Bon jour, Monsieur Casper."

"Bon jour, Anna-Marie; how do you like that engraving?"

"It is very beautiful."

"There is a 'but' in your tone; what is it?"

"It is nothing like the original, monsieur."

"Of course not—it lacks the coloring. Have *you* seen the painting?"

She bowed. "The Signor Angelo got me an admittance."

"More than I ever got, then," said I.

"Yet you were in Rome, monsieur?"

"Yes, only for a little while. I have yet to visit your bell' Italia. I travelled in France, America, and Germany, of which you know I am partly a native by blood."

"I know—monsieur is a Tedesco."

"For which you, as a good Italian, are bound to hate me."

"Madonna mia! no, signor," said Anna, smiling.

I laughed at her deprecating manner, and sat down in an easy-chair; but as she moved again to the picture it struck me, "Ask her your question;" and I suddenly addressed her, but in a quiet, meditative way, as if it was a problem that had just occurred to me.

"Anna, when a woman loves, she cannot conceal every sign of it?"

She turned before she answered, and looked full at me, with those great, observant eyes, set under the fine, well-defined brows. It was a look, amused, surprised, and suspicious. It certainly was an odd question for a young man to ask so young a girl.

Then she answered, still watching me under her long lashes:

"It depends on her character, Monsieur Casper. A woman with a firm will and self-control can do so."

"I don't believe it, Anna."

She slightly shrugged her shoulders. The action said plainly, "I don't care what you believe; it cannot alter fact."

"Well, grant that an experienced woman could, a very young girl could not," said I.

"Some might, and can."

"Not from all eyes, Anna, or at all moments."

"Eh bien! Monsieur honored me by asking my opinion, and I answered his question."

"Answer another, then, Fleur-de-Marie. Can a woman love and not know it, not be aware of it?"

"A *woman*? no, monsieur, hardly; a young girl, yes," said the Provençale, with a quiet decision that carried unwilling conviction.

"How is that possible, Anna? the heart must know when it puts forth affection."

"Yes, monsieur; but the heart can mistake itself."

Did she know how she was stabbing me, and ruthlessly treading down my hopes? There was something in her dark eyes that made me more than fear she read me. Still, I braved it out, and fell back on a new position. What a fool I was to make myself miserable about her words. What could she know, a girl, a child of fifteen? I forgot that she was a Southron, and, besides, had for years struggled alone with the world, face to face with life, in a stern enough form."

"After all, Anna," said I, "what can you know about the heart, at your age? you are a child, and have yet to read it in yourself and others."

"Madonna mia; in myself, perhaps, signor, but not in others," said the cameo-seller, with a quiet significance that startled me, and made me curse myself for saying a word to her

"Vanity, vanity!" said I, trying to turn it off with a laugh, "thy name is woman."

"No, Monsieur Casper, but I know my own sex better than you do. Test it—ask the same question of Madame votre mère, or—Mademoiselle Nina."

I leaned back in my chair, feeling staggered, feeling that this girl read me through. I had made a false step which it was impossible to retrieve, and I knew it. I could not even cover my defeat, and sat silent till Nina came in, throwing her hat one way and her scarf another.

"A thousand pardons, Anna-Marie, but I see that monsieur mon frère has been entertaining you. Have you been here long?"

"Only about ten minutes, mademoiselle."

"What made *you* unpunctual, Miss Nina?" said I.

"Oh, Theodora was chatty, and then Mr Claverhouse came in with the boys whom he had in his studio sitting to him, and then we got talking about Rome and the arts, till I quite lost note of time. He gave me a message for you, too, Fleur-de-Marie, to tell you to go to him at ten to-morrow morning."

"I am always at the signor's service."

"You are evidently a great favorite of his," said I. "What does he want you for, I wonder?"

Without arresting her pencil, Nina answered me.

"He is at work on a sculpture, a group of several figures, and he wants her for one of them; it is for this that he has taken Walter's children."

"Oh, is it? And how does he keep them still?"

"He can do anything he likes, I believe, Cas; but he told me, laughingly, that Anna would manage them."

"With her witcheries, eh?" said I, disguising under a light tone the pain and fiercely vengeful passion which Nina's speech stirred in me.

Yet, could she love him and speak so frankly?—impossible. But talk, think as I would, Anna's words haunted and troubled me—
"But the heart can mistake itself."

I rose up and left the room. I was beginning to fear this Provençale as I did Guy de Cavagnac. I could not remain still or settle to anything at home, so I ordered out my horse and rode into the Park—as yet empty—my blood and brain at fever-heat. A miserable-looking woman begged of me “a penny, for the sake of the pretty lady that loved me,” and I flung her one with an oath, and a rough “Go to the devil!”

She stood and cursed me—“Be damned to you! there’s a devil in you that will drag you down to hell, where ye belong!”

I put spur to my horse and dashed away furiously, nor did I slacken till I came to the end of Rotten Row; and then, as I turned back, I saw in the distance a coal-black horse and large black dog approaching. I knew who the rider must be, for none but its master ever rode the fiery mare. I was on the point of escaping into Knightsbridge, when a sudden thought, evil as the demon that was in me, struck me. I would tell him that which would at once raise up his sensitive honor, an impassable barrier between him and Nina. I turned back at a walk, and we met.

“Deserted your muses, Claverhouse?” was my salute, and I gave him my Judas hand. His, as usual, was cool to the touch, mine was burning hot, and he remarked it, glancing keenly in my face.

“How hot your hand is, Casper: are you ill?”

“No, indeed, Stewart; if so, it is from too much happiness. Congratulate me. I tell you, because you are one of the secret ones, so only repeat it to one as secret as yourself.”

“What is your secret, then? One of your jests, Cas?”

“No, earnest. In a few months I shall have, I hope, to ask you to my wedding; my engagement has been long and secret, but the lady is old enough now.”

“Eh bien! I congratulate you a thousand times.”

I was vexed.

“You don’t believe me. You don’t even ask her name, Stewart.”

“It is not for me to ask it,” he said, looking slightly surprised, “or necessary for me to know, unless you choose to say.”

I dared not look at him. I could only cover my lie by assuming a grandiose air.

“Her name, Signor Maestro, is Nina Theodora Lennox.”

I glanced at him, but I could detect no change. If his hand closed like a vice on the bridle, I could not perceive it; if every drop of blood receded to his heart, numbing it with its deadly chill, the dark colorless face, the steady lip and downcast eye, betrayed nothing. To me his had always been a most unreadable face, and now more than ever it was a sealed book, sealed so completely, that my spirit rose exultant, believing that I must have been mistaken.

Blind, blind again! I feel and know now that the blow had gone too straight and deep for outward sign. The heart was numbed.

At the end of the ride he left me. “He must go back to work,” he said, “to be ready for his Provençale, who was to come to-morrow,” and I laughed at him, calling him the slave of his Art. He

paused a moment, and looking back, said, "You, Casper, are the slave of your atheism and your pleasure!"

Shall I never get his face out of my memory, or his voice out of my ears?

CHAPTER X.

THE COUNT UNMASKS AN ENEMY.

GUIDO DI SCHIARA came one morning to the sculptor's house, and met Luigi in the hall.

"The Signor Angelo is in his studio, I suppose?" he said, pausing with his foot on the stair.

"Yes, signor, but you can of course go up. Only last night he remarked to me, 'Amico, it is some days since we have seen the Signor Guido.' You will be welcome."

"Is he alone?"

"Yes."

"Then I will go up. Has the fanciulla Anna been here to-day?"

"No, signor; yesterday the maestro had her here sitting to him."

The count ascended the stairs with his usual light, noiseless tread, traversed the gallery and anteroom, and quietly entered the studio—so quietly, that the sculptor did not perceive him.

There he sat, motionless, the chisel still in his hand, the slight figure bending forward, the beautiful head bowed on the marble at which he had been working, so still and motionless that he hardly seemed to breathe and live, till Guido's hand, light and tender as a woman's, was laid on his shoulder, and then he started and lifted a dark, haggard face.

"Angelo, amico mio, what is wrong? there are no secrets between us two."

Stewart rose up, putting him off.

"Caro mio, I was thinking, idling, instead of working; solitary thought is most often sorrowful. I am glad you have come in. See, the marble is assuming shape; here is a drawing of what it will be. I want you to sit to me for this figure, holding up the child."

"I am always at your service; but has your memory played you false?"

"How—what do you mean?"

"It placed before you, as by inspiration, the model for the most perfect figure of your most perfect work," said Cavagnac, watching him quietly.

The sculptor took up his chisel, and, chipping lightly at the marble, answered,

"I had rather have the model before me. Memory is a fickle nymph, and might not give me details."

"She gave you every trait before, though, with wonderful faith; but then that *was* nothing less than an inspiration."

Claverhouse made no answer, but Guido saw that he paused for

a moment to steady his hand, and then he worked on in silence. He watched the chips flying off for a few minutes, and then said, carelessly,

"By-the-way, have you seen Wolfgang lately?"

"Yes, three days ago, out riding in the Park."

"I wonder he does not marry. He would not shrink from going to an altar and through a service at which he scoffs, would he?"

"No."

It was a very quiet "no," and Cavagnac looked at him pained and troubled.

"Car' amico mio, you are trying me deeply. You cannot put me off and deceive me, as you could one who loves you less. Some heavy sorrow has fallen on you; let me share it."

The sculptor flung down his chisel, and turned from the still marble to the living friend.

"Why should you? you have your own troubles, without sharing mine."

"For what else do I call you friend? for what else did the same—Angelo, do you think I cannot read *you*? why did you remember that child for twelve years? why are you, who have seen the noblest and most lovely, still wifeless, save for the memory of one young English girl, as high-souled and noble as she is beautiful? you love her—you have loved her from a boy."

"Guido, Guido, hush! that is past; unless it was a most foul lie, she will soon be Wolfgang's wife."

Guido di Schiara started, and a dark flush rose to his bronzed face.

"That atheist German!" he almost broke out—"that soulless, useless pleasure-seeker, who has flung his freshness to the worthless of womankind, and buried his talents! who cannot know a pure and holy love! whose wife will be to him little more than his mistress! it is impossible. Who dared to assert it?"

"Casper himself, he has been long engaged to her, he said."

"Angelo, is it possible or likely that Nina Lennox should love or marry such a man?"

"No," said Stewart, steadily, "not likely, but still possible; and how could I, how can I, disbelieve such deliberate words? how charge Casper with such a lie, so base and beneath him? With all his faults, he was never mean, never forgot that he was a gentleman; in his wildest passion or resentment—and he is both jealous and revengeful—he never disgraced the name of St. Leger Wolfgang."

"I believe to my soul, then, that he has disgraced it now by as base a lie, told with as base a motive, as any one could wish," said Cavagnac. "I have watched him, and probed him, I think, to the bottom."

"So have I, Guido, and found in him something inexpressibly antagonistic, something nameless, but which I feel with painful sensitiveness, and shrink from as from a subtle and deadly poison."

"It is a deadly poison. Shall I give it its right name, its hideous deformity?"

"Yes."

"You named it just now—jealousy."

The sculptor turned and fixed his large gray eyes full on Cavagnac.

"Ay, look if you will, but I am right. It is true, though you only felt it, while I saw it; because you do not know your own powers, and how unconsciously you charm all who come within your reach; you cannot help it. You fascinate Wolfgang against his will, but he hates you for the very power which he cannot resist. Stay, hear me out. He is jealous of your genius, of your superiority, of your fame, which he has neither energy nor ambition to emulate; and lastly, more lately, he fears you as a rival—for, after his fashion, he does love his cousin—and therefore has told you this lie; you see his motive?"

"Plainly; if she is in truth his betrothed wife, I, knowing that, must in honor draw back."

"Exactly. Of all the men around her, his vanity makes him hold himself the superior—above *their* rivalry; but you, he feels irresistibly, are his superior, and the sense of his inferiority makes his jealous fear fix on you as his only possible rival. For Miss Lennox, she looks on him as her brother; she told Anna-Marie that he was 'son frère adopté.' Angelo, he has played a false game and made a false step. Your dream is not broken—Nina Lennox may yet be your wife."

"Guido, you are indeed a faithful friend," said the sculptor, clasping the Italian's hand in his own.

Guido di Schiara bowed his face and kissed those hands.

MANUSCRIPT XXI.

LOST.

"Day after day, day after day,
No life, nor breath, nor motion."

So it was with me. It seemed as if my life had flowed up to a dam and stopped there stagnant; it seemed a crisis. There was no going back, no unsaying words spoken, even if I would; I had told a deliberate and unvarnished lie, of which I must soon stand convicted, unless I made it the truth. I, St. Leger Wolfgang, convicted of a lie? Never! But it added another item of hatred against the man who had forced me to it. If I could have swept him from my path, blotted him out of the page of my life, I would have done it. I dreaded his personal influence, I feared to face him, to meet the clear, steadfast eyes, to hear the soft musical voice, and I avoided him for days; till at last, coming one night out of the Opera House, I suddenly found myself face to face with him and Cavagnac, slowly making their way through the crowd. The count slightly lifted his hat, foreign fashion, with his mocking smile, and, "Comment vous

portez vous, monsieur?" But Stewart, though he passed me close enough to speak, only bowed; and I saw his face in the lamplight, that it was stern and grave. I felt stunned. My eyes mechanically followed the tall figure till it disappeared, but I was conscious only of the dread that he suspected my lie, and so, even in the suspicion of it, despised me.

Despised! and by *that* man, whose good opinion, whose affection, even, I had always coveted and valued so high. I was maddened at the thought; furious to see how much I cared, how impossible it was to free myself from his silent influence. I felt as if an invisible chain were gathering round me, and I fled home to my chamber to bed, hoping for oblivion in sleep; but sleep came not. Whether in light or darkness, whether I shut or opened my eyes, I saw that beautiful face, those deep, sorrowful eyes ever looking at me with that steady unearthly light which had always to me something weird; and now, in the silent watches of the mysterious night, all the wild legends and traditions of my fatherland crowded into my excited brain, and I buried my face in my pillow. Was he, indeed, human, like myself? or—this man, with his noiseless step, his wondrous voice and beauty, and strange charm, such as I had never seen before or since, must have a secret spring, whose source was—ah, whence? I dared not, could not, find an answer in all my sceptic visionary lore.

I slept at last, heavily, and it was Nina's rich mellow voice that awoke me:

"Cas, you dear lazy boy," she said through the door, "have you a mind to emulate the Seven Sleepers? It is long past ten, and Aunt Georgine has actually gone out shopping, or something."

"By Jove! send me up some coffee, and I'll join you soon, Nina."

She answered, "Very well, Mr. Lazybones," and went away laughing.

I would have avoided her, for I dared not trust myself; and presently I stole down to my own study, but she heard me, for she came in almost immediately, and stopped abruptly, aghast, as well she might be, at my haggard face.

"Casper, my dear old boy, are you ill?"

I turned from her, and threw myself in my easy-chair.

"I had a bad night—I could not sleep; that is all."

"It is not all; you look—I don't know what like, for I never saw you look so before," she said, kneeling down before me, and winding her fingers round my hand. "Won't you tell me what is wrong, mon frère?"

All self-control fled before that horrible word; all thought, all calmness vanished before the ungovernable tempest that swept over me; and, hardly knowing what I did, I clasped my arms about her with wild passionate words.

"Not that, Nina, or you will drive me mad. I cannot bear it any longer. Brother! when my very heart is on fire, when I love you as no brother ever loved! hate me sooner, that I may win your love; have pity, and give me hope and life, or—"

“Casper!”

She flung off my hold as if it had been a child's, and sprung erect with such a cry as curdled my very blood; with such a face as made my head creep, as if ice-cold water had been poured slowly over it; such horror and terror and grief were in that nightmare face, as if I had been in very truth her brother.

“Nina! Nina!”

“Don't touch me!” She put out her hands with an almost frantic gesture, speaking in a low, frightened voice. “Let me pass, let me pass, for God's sake!”

But I threw myself between her and the door. I was desperate, and spoke with fierce desperation.

“No, by the God you invoke! only as my promised wife you leave me. I love you, I cannot live without you; I have sworn that you shall be mine, and that oath I will keep.”

She interrupted me. Her face changed; as a scroll that is rolled away, the girlishness left it, and she stood a woman in the grand beauty of her dignified womanhood. I had roughly broken a dream, and closed forever the page of her girlhood.

“Casper, Casper, you have, indeed, taught me a fearful lesson. Hush! hear me now a few words. I have loved you as a brother, God knows how dearly, but even then, from the hour I entered your house, there was a shadow between us, a want of something that I have since defined—that which has made you an atheist and a scoffer.”

“Nina, oh Nina, have mercy! Be my wife, and I will believe all you wish.”

“Belief is not of man, but of God—not of the creature, but the Creator,” she answered. “How can you, how dare you, profane the holiness of marriage? To you it is a mockery.”

“Don't speak like that, Nina. If that is the only bar—”

“It is not. I have loved you as a most dear brother, as much as if the same mother had borne us, and that cannot change its character; but now, now—oh Casper, Casper, why have you flung it back on me, and broken my idol?” She broke down utterly, and covered her face, weeping passionately. “You have left me nothing—nothing!”

“Is my love, my devotion, nothing? Is it nothing that I plead for your love as the only thing I value in life? that I must have it—”

“No—never.”

The words fell from her white lips slow, deliberate, irrevocable; her heart never would be mine, but her hand should—yes, should be. The thought that in truth a rival stood between us roused my darkest passion and fury, and I grasped her slender wrist with cruel force.

“Nina, mine alone you shall be; no rival shall stand between me and my love. I have sworn it, and thus I seal it.”

I clasped her in my arms, and stooped to kiss her lips, but with desperate, almost superhuman strength she flung off my grasp, sprung past me, and fled.

I stood like one stunned—stunned more by the force of the fierce passions that seemed consuming me than by her escape. How long I stood I know not, but I was roused by the shutting of the street door, and starting forward, I hurried out into the hall.

“Who was that who went out?” I asked a servant.

“I think, sir, it was Mrs. Mansell” (the house-keeper).

“Oh, was it? Where is Miss Nina?”

“Up-stairs, sir, I believe.”

I re-entered the study, rang for my groom, ordered my horse, and rode out. I rode wildly, recklessly, mercilessly, for the demon was in me, and urged me on.

It was hours before I returned, and then my mother met me in the hall.

“What! alone, my dear? I thought Nina was with you; but she must have gone to see Theodora.”

I staggered back, gasping, “Nina not here, mother?”

She drew me into a room near, and shut the door.

“What has happened, Casper? tell me quickly. Suspense kills me; your face sickens me with dread.”

I told her in a few wild, hurried words what had passed; she almost wrung her hands.

“What have you done, Casper? You were too violent; you startled the child and frightened her. She has gone to Walter. I will bring her back.”

But a sudden thought, a sudden terror seized me, and I followed her.

“Mother, come here; look in her room—come, come!”

She caught my alarm, and hurried up to Nina’s room. At a glance it seemed as usual; but my mother, advancing, called me in, in a terrified whisper.

“Look, look! she is gone. Fly to Walter, and see if she is indeed there. Look here.”

One drawer stood open and empty. There was also a small cabinet in which she kept her money and jewels—it stood open and empty. I saw no more, but hurried away to my brother’s. I must be calm now, and with a strong effort I asked the footman quietly for either his master or mistress.

“They have been out all day, sir.”

“Oh; when will they and Miss Nina be back?”

“Miss Nina, sir! she wasn’t with them. She hasn’t been here to-day at all.”

“Are you sure, Richard?”

“Positive, sir.”

“Well, if she should call in, Richard, tell her to hasten home, as an old school-friend of hers is waiting to see her.”

“I will, sir.”

I turned back into the street, and stood for a minute.

Can you imagine what I felt? My heart, my life, seemed to have stopped; sick, dizzy with terror for my work—yes, mine alone

Where was Nina?

Then I called a hansom, and drove straight to F——'s private inquiry office, where I saw F—— himself, and gave him every information and authority to advertise, or do anything to find the lady; only secretly, quietly, to avoid scandal. I told him that I cared not what it cost me, and asked what I should do.

"Nothing, sir; only wait, and leave all to me. Send me the lady's photograph—that is all."

I went home to my mother, and told her what I had done; and then—then, unable to remain still a moment, I went out; away to seek anything to distract thought, where I knew well.

I entered ——'s, near the Haymarket, but I might not have played if I had not met a stranger, a Frenchman, whom I had seen at V——'s once before: and this man tempted me on, and I played wildly and deeply, as I had not played since my youth; but, try as I would, thought would not be stifled. It was ever before me in letters of fire—Where is Nina? Where is Nina?

CHAPTER XI.

THAT POCKET-REVOLVER.

THE Count de Cavagnac sat reading the *Times*, not in dressing-gown and slippers, for he never troubled such articles; but dressed, ready at any moment to be on the move, ever on the alert. So there he sat by the open window, smoking a dainty cigarette and reading, when Auguste's quiet face was put in, and Auguste's quiet voice announced,

"Mademoiselle Anna. Will monsieur see her?"

"Yes, certainly, Auguste."

The dark eyes lighted up suddenly, and he left the window directly, meeting the cameo-seller as she came in.

"Always welcome, caralina; you are never in the way."

The girl's lips quivered, and her eyes dropped before his, but she said, in her usual quiet manner,

"Merci, monsieur. I came so early, because, when I have any information, you like it directly."

"Right; is it important, Anna?"

"I do not know, Monsieur le Comte: you must judge of that. I am but the servant, you the master."

"Well, well; sit down there, my child, and tell me your story in detail—there is time on hand."

Time? Yes, time to look on the face, to listen to the voice, that were fast growing into his very heart, playing the holiest, sweetest music that God has given to man.

"Tell me, Anna," he said.

"Monsieur, it is not long. Last night I was out late from a theatre."

"Anna! Anna!"

"Monsieur, I had Corsare."

"My child, can even his faithful guardianship shelter you from the bold gaze and insulting word of the *roué*?"

The Provençale's head drooped, and for a moment the crimson flushed over her brow, but it faded instantly; and she answered,

"I am used to that, monsieur."

The man crushed a heavy sigh, and merely bade her "Go on with her story."

"Well, monsieur. I was walking slowly along, when two men came out of ——'s. You know it?"

"Yes, well."

"They were before me. I knew them both, directly, and followed them. One was Louis Bonheur, and the other Monsieur St. Leger Wolfgang."

"What the devil were they doing in company again?"

"They had met in the *salon-de-jeu*. I followed them to the Quadrant, and Monsieur Bonheur was talking constantly till they came to that tall archway that leads down a court."

"I know it."

"He drew Monsieur Wolfgang just through it, and then I came close enough, under the shadow of a corner, to overhear them, as well as see, by peeping cautiously round. Monsieur Wolfgang looked haggard, almost wild, I thought. Bonheur said, laughing, 'Fortune was fickle to-night, and smiled and frowned on you twenty times.'

"'Curse her, and you too!' You see, Monsieur Casper forgot his politeness. 'Why do you stop me here?'

"Bonheur said, to show him a pretty little toy he had bought, and did not like. He would sell it for two pounds; and out he took the pocket-revolver I saw him buy at Hurne's."

Cavagnac leaned forward, deeply attentive, as Anna-Marie went on:

"Monsieur Wolfgang examined it slightly, at first. 'He did not want it,' he said, and then suddenly changed—'Yes, I'll buy it; it might be useful some way or another, only it has got a mark—letters on it.' 'Oh, *ce n'est rien, ce n'est rien, monsieur*—it can be scratched off.' Monsieur Casper seemed too excited to think much of anything, and he took the revolver, paying two sovereigns for it. 'The only gold I have about me,' he said, 'and they happen to be Australian sovereigns—richer, purer gold than ours, Monsieur Gavannier.'"

"Gavannier, Anna? is that what he had called himself to Wolfgang? That is valuable."

"Yes, monsieur; they stood talking a little, and then I gathered that they only met for the second time (the first was at V——'s) that night in the *salon-de-jeu*, that Monsieur Casper had lost to Bonheur; and by his eagerness about the revolver, it seemed to me that Louis Bonheur was determined to get rid of too marked a weapon."

"Which marked weapon," added Guido di Schiara, slowly, "is now in the possession of Casper Von Wolfgang. Anna," he said,

with a sudden passionate force that startled her, "I would to God I had that man abroad! I would call him out and kill him."

The cameo-seller made no answer, and Cavagnac paced to and fro for a few minutes, till at last he stopped, and said in his usual quiet manner and softened voice, "You have done well, as you always do. I wanted but the name Bonheur went by here to unearth him and his sanguinary plots, and you have fitted in that link."

The Provençale rose to leave, with her gentle "Au revoir, monsieur."

He took both her hands, and his lips half opened, as if he would have spoken, but instead he suddenly stooped, and pressed his lips to the slender hands he held.

"God keep thee, my child."

She went on her weary way, lightened by the memory of his face and voice.

And he covered his face and asked himself, "Can it be so? has this child crept into my heart, bearded man as I am, seared by the world?"

Ah, Guido di Schiara, is it the first time or will it be the last that a child has crept into the very heart's core of a seared, bearded man?

* * * * *

Rather later in the morning, somewhere about ten o'clock, the Provençale went to the sculptor's house to sit to him, and just as she rang Cavagnac himself came up.

"Ah, again, my child," he said, as they entered the house. "Is Mr. Claverhouse at home, Grey?"

"He has just come in, sir, and gone straight up to his studio."

"Come, then, Anne-Marie, he is waiting for you; we will go up."

Anna de Laval followed him up to the anteroom, and there paused, while Guy knocked lightly at the studio door.

"Who is there?"

"Guido."

"You may come in, amico."

Cavagnac started. His ear told him unerringly that there was something wrong. He could read the least change of inflection in that voice.

"Wait here, Anna," he said, and went in. One glance at the sculptor's stern and troubled face was enough.

"Angelo, what has happened?"

"What has *not* happened?" said Stewart, sternly. "Nina Lennox is gone, and it is Casper's work."

"Gone, gone? Ah, I can guess. The false, dishonored liar! tell me all."

"It is soon told. I called this morning at Lady Falconbridge's to fetch Alec for a ride, and I saw her looking so ill, that I asked anxiously if anything was wrong. She burst into tears, and told me the truth, as Mrs. Wolfgang had herself confessed it to her. Yesterday Casper spoke to his cousin. How violently and shamefully, you can guess, from the fact that she instantly left the house."

“Gran’ Dio! that child! Had she money? why did not she fly to Lady Falconbridge?”

“She was excited, and naturally feared that her aunt, her guardian, would reclaim her. O Nina, Nina! and I not near, to save and shelter you from such unmanly cowardice! What will become of her, so young, inexperienced, and beautiful? Guido, it is almost more than I can bear. I dare not think.”

“What has been done?”

“They have employed F——, and I went myself to the *Times* office, to put in an advertisement for Lady Falconbridge, so couched, and in Italian, that only Nina will detect the meaning. I must find her; I cannot remain inactive.”

“No, nor I—it is my trade; but, caro mio, had she money?”

“Yes, and jewellery; and in that precaution there is some slight relief. She is young, but I know her well; and while she has money there is not such cause for immediate fear; but she, so cherished, alone, broken-hearted—oh, Guido amico, I would give all I possess to have her back in safety.”

“Sophistry is no use,” said Guido, smiling sadly; “the heart speaks too loud; it will be heard. But we have a most efficient detective at hand—one I have tested—Anna-Marie. She read Wolfgang long ago, and may be trusted.”

“I know; she has a sweet, tender woman’s heart, and her wandering life will make it easier and more likely for her to find Nina. With so many searching for her she can scarcely escape. Is Anna here?”

“Yes. Anna—come here, my child.”

The girl came in directly, and as she saluted her dark eye went from one face to the other with a quick comprehensive glance, but she merely said, softly,

“Messieurs, I am at your service.”

In a few words the sculptor told her of Nina’s flight, and what he wanted of her; he gave no explanation of his interest in it, for he read in her tender, gentle eyes that she needed none. She would have been less than woman if she had.

MANUSCRIPT XXII.

TEMPEST.

OH, those days of torture! they are burned into my memory as with fire. It was not so much the anxiety, for I knew that Nina was no country girl, open to every snare and deception. She had read much, and had mixed with the world, and observed it; she had been bred all her life in cities, and was not at all likely to fall into any danger, as long, at any rate, as she had money. But it was the storm and strife of my own fierce passion that wore me out, and seemed to be killing me by inches.

Why could her heart never be given to me unless it were no longer free? It was not free. I knew it, felt it, and cursed the man who had dared to come between me and my love; cursed his beauty and his genius, cursed the very hour he was born, and the breath that gave him life!

Once I entered the music-room, where stood his wonderful work in all its grandly still and solemn beauty. Did its holy calm, its lifeless life still the tempest? No, it roused it to unspeakable blind fury; the silent marble had a thousand tongues, for in every line, every grain of it, his great love was graven.

The demon of destruction seized me in its savage impulse, and I caught up from the mantle-piece a large Indian tomahawk which I had brought from the States. It had in other hands killed savages; my hands, more savage still, would have destroyed Art. I stood before it, and lifted the weapon for the blow. How perfectly the master-hand had chiselled every line! how faultless every figure! The grandeur of the whole conception struck me with a sudden awe, and sent the whirlwind of passions back on my heart; the mightiness of genius stilled the demon, and my arm fell.

"Fool that I am," I muttered fiercely, "to shrink before dead marble!"

Was it dead? Is anything dead on which Intellect has imprinted itself?

A second and a third time I raised my hand, and again it fell. A fourth time I swung high the murderous weapon, desperate, determined. It was descending. One second more, and the beautiful sculpture would have been defaced forever, when a hand caught my arm, and wrenched the tomahawk from my grasp.

"Are you mad?" said my mother, sternly, "or is it a Vandal barbarian of yore in the form of my son?"

I turned from her without a word, and went out. Hours after, when I returned, the sculpture was gone.

"I have sent it back to the sculptor," said my mother. "I see all now, my son. It is better there than here."

Better indeed!

Day after day passed without any news, without F—— obtaining the least clew or trace of the fugitive; and he could not issue advertisements describing her, as I had put my positive veto upon the least publicity. I left to my mother's smooth tongue and woman's wit to account for Nina's absence to acquaintance and friends.

Stewart Claverhouse I avoided like poison. How could I face the man before whom I stood convicted of a disgraceful lie and unmanly violence to a woman? He must know all, for Theodora had told him—she said so. "He was their friend," she told me quietly; "he had asked her what grieved her, and she would not tell that man a lie for anything."

Did she know that I had done so? I avoided them all, for I could not bear their silent reproach. My mother alone took my part, and blamed Nina. "The child," she said, "was impetuous and ungrateful to behave so to those who had loved and cherished her; but she

will return, or at least we shall find her, and then, Casper, you will be no son of mine if you tamely resign her to this brilliant rival."

"Resign her? no, never, never, to mortal man! She shall be my wife, or—"

I stopped, for I felt choking, stifling as if for want of air, and I left the room.

Oh, if there had only been one softening womanly word or influence! Oh, if I had only had such a mother as Cora Claverhouse must have been!

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUGITIVE.

THE shipwrecked seaman cast on some narrow rock or raft, with the wide ocean bounding his gaze on every side, could hardly be more alone than Nina Lennox, when she turned that bright summer morning from what had once been her home, too excited to feel anything definitely yet save the wild impulse to fly, to hide herself away. Her first natural idea had been to seek Theodora's protection, but instantly there came a thought that she would be reclaimed by Madame Von Wolfgang, her guardian. She did not know the law, and that her guardian could not reclaim her against her will without the intervention of law.

She paused at the end of the street, to calm and collect herself, for heart and brain were dizzy. Pursuit would be speedy, and it must be baffled. Nina knew well—what beautiful woman does not?—that she was too marked and striking to escape notice easily, if at all. She drew her veil close, wrapped her mantle about her, and walked into Oxford Street, where she called a cab, and bade the man drive her to the London Bridge Terminus. Not that she had any intention of leaving London; but if her pursuers should find out the cabman, they would be thrown off the scent. She did not know that one of those pursuers was a man whose whole life and very nature were detective, to whom failure was hardly known, to whom all her ruses would be as daylight, and whose search it was scarcely possible she could ultimately elude.

It was still little over noon when the fugitive entered the busy bustling Terminus, and sat down in the first-class waiting-room, to think where she should seek a safe lodging; but she soon rose and went to the ticket-window to change some notes.

The clerk thought she wanted a ticket, and said,

"Where to, ma'am? train's just going."

"Thank you—I am not going by train. Can you oblige me by change for two five-pound notes?"

"With pleasure, ma'am." He glanced at the veiled lady, struck by the sweet musical voice, and gave her the change, following her with his glance, as she went away, not towards the platform, but through the entrance. He noticed her dress, too, as some men will;

it was handsome, though simple, and in such perfect keeping with her high-bred appearance. She wore a black dress, of rich, soft cashmere, and a dark mantle, with a velvet cap and black net veil.

Nina left London Bridge, and made her way towards St. Paul's, keeping on foot, for she knew well enough that she might be traced if she took either a cab or omnibus; and as she walked along, she revolved the best measures for concealment. It would look strange enough to excite suspicion, wherever she sought lodging, to see so young and well-dressed a lady quite alone; and Nina knew it. She could not call herself a teacher of any sort, for her dress and air would belie her. It struck her suddenly to call herself a foreigner, just arrived in London, and for the rest they might think what they liked; while she had money and could pay, she was safe.

She passed St. Paul's, on to Ludgate Hill, and then nature began to give way. She entered a baker's shop and took some refreshment, not, though, forgetting the character she had determined to assume; and as she paid for what she had had, she asked, with a strong and well-feigned French accent,

"Madame, can you tell me where I shall find a good lodging? I am only this day arrived here."

"How many is it for, ma'am?"

"Only myself. One room is enough; and being a stranger, of course I shall pay in advance."

The woman's face cleared.

"Well, ma'am, I have a room that I sometimes let, but it's only got a sofa-bed."

"No matter, madame; let me see it."

The woman led the way up-stairs to a front room on the third floor, very well furnished of its kind, though to Nina, used to so elegant a home, it looked very humble indeed. Still it was a roof—a place to hide her weary head—and she took it, arranged with Mrs. Harper to act house-keeper for her, and paid a week in advance, giving her name as *Mademoiselle de Valère*. Her luggage, she said, had not yet passed the Customs. She had all she needed in the travelling-bag she carried; which was true for the time.

But now she was safe. When she found herself alone, the passion and excitement which had kept her up gave way, and she wept such deep, silent weeping as shook her from head to foot; and when the excitement and passionate tears had passed, they gave place to an intense depression and prostration. Now she could feel the full effects of the impetuous step she had taken.

She stood alone—the past a closed page of her life, the future a dark, hopeless chaos. Casper had rudely, indeed, broken her dream and flung her affection back on herself; every sisterly caress, every frank, innocent kiss, came back now like stinging poison. He had done more; he had told her that she should be his wife in spite of any rival, and those words had opened the woman's eyes to the music-book of her own heart—wondrously beautiful music from the hand of a great Composer, whose mighty genius cannot fall short of perfection.

And in the silence and solitude she read the music that had been written there so many years; she saw the face round which, unconsciously, every thought and hope and aspiration of her young life had twined "as the vine weaves her tendrils."

Oh Nina, Nina! womanlike, thou has deified a being, beautiful indeed, but mortal as thyself, and given thy love, thy whole soul, to an earthly idol, forgetting that thy God is a jealous God, who will not give his glory to another!

CHAPTER XIII.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL.

NEITHER Stewart Claverhouse nor Guy de Cavagnac were men to let the grass grow under their feet. The first thing to learn was a minute description of the fugitive's dress, and this the sculptor easily obtained from Lady Falconbridge, without in the least raising any suspicion. He had only to call, put a few incidental questions, and Theodora told him every detail. "For," she said, "you may possibly see the child, and bring her back to me."

The next step was more difficult, because Cavagnac, like Mr. F——, was unable to advertise; but he and Stewart had this advantage—they knew Nina personally, her mind, and could therefore form a near guess as to her first movements.

"When she left the house," said the detective, "her mind was in a most excited and agitated state. She will have hurried on for a little way blindly, probably towards a thoroughfare where the bustle and crowd would make her pause and think; her impulse being naturally to put space between her and Monsieur Casper, she would take conveyance—either an omnibus or cab."

"Probably the latter," said Claverhouse. "She would know or feel that in the former she would attract notice: few omnibus passengers are so *distingué*, either in dress or appearance, as Nina Lennox."

"You are right, Angelo. What says Anna's woman's wit?"

"Oh, monsieur, mademoiselle would take a cab without doubt."

"Bien—so I think; and she will have been set down in some crowded part. We must find out the said cab by patient inquiry, and with three of us we shall find the right one. Stewart, if Nina had been more calm she would have disguised more thoroughly."

"Guido, Anna, offer what rewards you choose for information, only, for Nina's sake, give Anna's address."

"Certainly. Allons donc; we begin with the cab-stands nearest to——Street."

The three parted company at the end of the square, and took each a different direction.

Days passed by in futile search, and a week had gone by when one morning the cameo-seller came to Cavagnac.

"Monsieur, I have been to the maestro, but he was out, so I came here. I have found the cabman."

"Ah, Sainte Vierge! then I have the trail. Where did he drive her to, Anna?"

"To London Bridge Terminus, monsieur."

The count rose and took his hat.

"Diable! got into the crowd," said he. "N'importe, I am on the scent now, and shall not lose it. Anna, you must come with me to London Bridge; leave Corsare and the cameo-box here with Auguste, and throw your mantle over that pretty Roman dress, while I write a line for the signor."

"Monsieur, I left a note for him with monsieur his uncle telling him what I had done."

"My child, you never forget anything: come."

She followed him from the house, but keeping a little distance behind him till he called a cab and bade the man drive fast to London Bridge.

The whole way Cavagnac sat silent, and his young companion saw that his dark face was more anxious and grave than usual. She little thought that she, the poor wandering cameo-seller, was the object of his thoughts.

At the Terminus he dismissed the cab and entered the station.

"Now, Anna, I shall go first to the ticket-clerk, for he may have changed money or notes for her." And he suited the action to the word, though he had to wait till the tickets had been given for a train just going off to Brighton. Then he astonished the clerk—the very one Nina had seen—by asking,

"Were you here last Wednesday on duty between twelve and one, or two?"

"Yes, sir, certainly."

"Do you remember giving a ticket to any passenger answering this description:—A lady, very young, rather tall, and of distinguished appearance, wearing a black velvet cap, and thick black lace or net veil, a black cashmere dress, and dark mantle, wearing also a gold watch and chain, and gold cross hanging to it, and she carried a black travelling-bag? Her voice, too, was peculiarly soft and musical."

The description tallied exactly.

"Yes, sir; I did see and notice such a lady, but she did not take a ticket—only changed two five-pound notes, and went out that way again."

"She said nothing, I suppose, about her route?"

"Oh no, sir; not a word, only that she wasn't going down the line."

"Thank you." He turned away, and said in Italian to Anna-Marie, "I thought so; she is in London, and now to trace her."

"How, monsieur? It would be easier in Paris, but here chacun s'occupe de ses affaires, and every one is so horribly free."

"Tant mieux, n'est ce pas?" retorted Cavagnac, half laughing, as they went out. "We must ask the policemen who were on duty at

the time in the neighborhood, all the tramps, and itinerant venders, et cetera; any one likely or unlikely to have noticed her. Some of the little Arabs may have offered to carry her bag. So now we part company, and meet here in an hour and a half." They separated, to pursue their weary and certainly somewhat hopeless work—to Anna entirely fruitless. She met Cavagnac at the rendezvous with a white, weary face, almost with tears of vexation in her dark eyes.

"No news, Anna?"

"No, monsieur."

"I have. She asked a policeman the shortest way to St. Paul's, so there we must go."

Again he called a cab, and they were driven to St. Paul's Churchyard, where they got out.

"By Heaven!" said the count, half laughing, "it is the strangest chase I ever had."

"Que faire?" said the child, looking up in his face. "Monsieur is at fault."

"Not I, *car' amica mia*. She walked here, and by the time she reached the spot her excitement will have given place to faintness or dizziness, and she will have entered the first confectioner's or baker's that she saw. There are not many all down Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street, so we can beat them all—I this side, you on the other; we can signal each other. *Allez donc, petite*."

She obeyed, and crossed to the other side, that on which, farther down, Mrs. Harper's shop was situated. Each went unsuccessfully into two or three, and Anna was close to Mrs. Harper's, when, looking across for her companion, she saw him stop and beckon to her.

The girl crossed the road directly, in spite of the crowd of vehicles, and gained his side. He drew her under one of the many archways leading into courts with which Ludgate Hill abounds.

"You were going to try that shop, were you not, Anna?"

"Yes."

"Right; you would have found her. As I paused, my eye scanned the houses, and at a window on the third floor I caught a glimpse of a face that I am positive was hers. She is there; but for her sake in every way, only you must appear. Tell her, at present, that you alone have tracked her, and try to make her go to Lady Falconbridge. Here is money, in case you or she need it. I leave all to you, trust all to you."

"*Merci mille fois*; will monsieur wait here?"

"No; all is safe in your hands. I will go to the maestro, and report our success."

"And to Madame Falconbridge?"

"No; not till I see or hear from you."

"*Eh bien*, and Monsieur Casper shall know nothing."

"Ah! Anna, you are wicked," said Cavagnac, smiling; "but I wish his creole blood would make him mad enough to commit suicide. *Adieu, mon enfant*. Come to me as soon as possible."

"*Oui, monsieur, certainement*."

The count walked rapidly away, the Provençale recrossed the road, and entered Mrs. Harper's shop.

"Madame, I want to see mademoiselle—the lady who lodges here, s'il vous plait."

Mrs. Harper looked at the stranger, puzzled by the contradiction of her dress and appearance, but her being a foreigner matched with her lodger's story.

"Well," she said, "Madmosel de Valère told me she would see no one—that she knew no one in England."

"But I have just arrived here, and she will see me if madame will kindly show me the way up-stairs, and tell her that her model must see her."

Mrs. Harper called a servant-girl and bade her take the young person up to the French lady.

Anna-Marie followed her closely, and as the girl reached the room-door, she put her quietly aside, saying, "Merci, I will not trouble you further," and entered the apartment.

There sat Nina Lennox, her head resting on her hands, her eyes fixed on a book, no word of which they saw, so changed, that Anna paused, startled. Nina turned sharply, and sprung to her feet with a low cry. But the Provençale clasped her hands.

"O mademoiselle, que vous êtes malheureuse!"

Nina hid her face on Anna's shoulder and burst into tears for the first time since the day she fled, and the Provençale let her weep. Her soft touch and silent sympathy soothed and calmed more than words.

At last she lifted her face.

"Anna, how did you find me? Do you know all that has passed?"

"Yes; all. I tracked you step by step. Oh, mademoiselle, if you only knew the suffering your flight has caused! I do not speak of Monsieur Casper, or madame his mother, but your friends—Monsieur et Madame Falconbridge."

"I can't help it," said Nina, hurriedly. "If I go back, Aunt Georgine will take me. I am under age, and Casper—Anna, I can't bear it; it would kill me by inches. Are they seeking me still?"

"Yes; Monsieur Casper has placed it in F——'s hands."

Nina turned, and paced to and fro.

"What shall I do? where shall I fly? He can track me down if you could. What made *you* do it, child?" she said, suddenly stopping.

"Mademoiselle has been kind to me, and my heart is grateful to her. I knew that when her money was gone she would suffer. I am used to struggle, and knew well, better than she, the difficulties and dangers which surround a beautiful and delicately bred woman, cast suddenly adrift, and I searched till I found her. Oh, signorina mia, go back to your best friends who love you! The Lady Theodora will not give you up."

"Impossible! I cannot. Anna, English law will give me up. You do not know it."

"But, mademoiselle, pardon me. Monsieur Falconbridge told me

that Madame Wolfgang could not reclaim you till she went to some court of laws."

"But she will succeed; she will go there, dear Anna. I know her. She will—no, I cannot return. I must leave here directly; *you* will not betray me. Go, go, child; I shall come to no harm."

"Mademoiselle will not return to her friends? Eh bien, you are alone and friendless; so am I. I swear I will not lose sight of you; if you insist, I must go, but you will not escape my vigilance. If you will leave this—"

"I must. I dare not stop."

"Then, mademoiselle, come with me; deign to accept the shelter of my lodging. Humble as it is, you will be safer there, and will not be alone; to wait on you and serve you will be a pleasure to the poor cameo-seller."

"Anna, serve me! you are my equal in every way *now*."

The cameo-seller shook her head sadly. Equal! no, Nina had friends, and the faithful love of a noble heart; but she had no friends, no one to love her, no one she dared to love.

"Mademoiselle will honor me by coming, then?" was all the patient lips uttered.

Nina, affectionate and impulsive as a Southron, threw her arms round the girl, vanquished.

"Anna, what is there about you that I cannot withstand you, that makes me love you so well?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle; because I love you, perhaps," said the Provençale, simply.

"Ah, Anna, it is true; love begets love."

Anna de Laval sighed; she knew not herself why, save that for her, life stretched away a blank weary waste, with little of love or hope to lighten its dreariness.

Night came at last, and then Nina Lennox went forth to share the humble home of the wanderer.

"And now, mademoiselle," said Fleur-de-Marie, "I must go for Corsare and my cameo-box. I left them with an artist, to whom I sat this morning."

Anna de Laval, it will be seen, considered that the end sanctifies the means; and so she said to herself, as she made her way to B—Street, where she found, not only Cavagnac, but the sculptor.

"Doubly welcome, Anna mia," he said; "we knew you would come to-night. Where is Miss Lennox?"

"Signori miei, you must keep her secret until I have her leave to go further. I have your word?"

"Yes."

"The signorina is at this moment in my lodging." And Anna reported faithfully what had passed.

The two men looked at each other with such relief as only such anxiety as theirs had been can know.

"What is the next step?" said Claverhouse. "Her friends must know of her being in safety without betraying her hiding-place; and she must be persuaded to go to Lady Falconbridge."

"I have tried already," said the cameo-seller, "but she will not; but I think I may finally succeed. I told her what the Signor Angelo said about the law, but it did not shake her."

"Tell her again, Anna; tell her that her aunt cannot reclaim her under three or four weeks, and that in that time she and her friends will have time to take some decisive step. Put before her, as you can, the practical impossibility of her remaining long as she is; her very name will suffer; her aunt's story of her being on a visit cannot long hold."

"I will try, monsieur; but if I fail—"

"Then," said the sculptor, firmly, "Lady Falconbridge must see her."

"You have put F—— at fault, Anna, of course?" said Cavagnac, with the quiet assurance that is sure the right thing has been done.

"Yes, monsieur, at once. I asked Mrs. Harper to tell me when the night Dover mail went; we drove to London Bridge, took tickets for Dover, and then, slipping out of the Terminus, walked all the way to my lodging."

"Angelo, this child is beyond price! And the mantle, Anna?"

"Oh, monsieur, I bought her a plain black one, which she put on as we left the platform, so Monsieur F—— will go a wild chase enough. See, Monsieur Guy, here are only five pounds of your money."

"It is the Signor Angelo's money, my child."

"Keep it, Fleur-de-Marie," said Stewart, smiling, "though it is not in money I shall pay you for what you have done. Now write me a line to Lady Falconbridge, to set her mind more at rest, and I will post it. Disguise your hand, and it will never be traced."

Cavagnac opened his desk, and Anna-Marie, after a moment's thought, wrote—

"All pursuit after Miss Lennox is useless, as she is beyond it. Her friends may be easy about her, as she is staying with a faithful friend, who hopes soon to persuade her to seek your protection."

This she enclosed, addressed, and delivered to Stewart; then slung her box, took her dog, and went away.

MANUSCRIPT XXIII.

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER.

"DARKER and darker
The black shadows fell—"

—yes, on me, on all I touched, on all around. My mother did not soothe me: she only roused—ten thousand devils! as if they needed *that!*—my fierce passions and jealous hatred yet further. And to drown, to crush, their gnawing, vulture-like preying, I flung myself madly into every excitement and dissipation.

For a week F—— was at fault; then he raised hope, only to dash

it down. He had traced Nina to London Bridge Terminus, and out of it again, and then lost her entirely. Two days after, in the evening, just as my mother and I had gone into the drawing-room, after dinner, F—— was shown in, and almost his first words were:

“I am afraid, sir, the lady has escaped us and got abroad.”

Then he told me his story. He had traced Nina to St. Paul's, thence to a baker's shop, a Mrs. Harper's, in Ludgate Hill, where she had lodged for a week, calling herself *Mademoiselle de Valère*, a French lady only just arrived in London. He was a day too late; think of that! I ground my teeth. Only the day before a young foreigner had come to her, but of her Mrs. Harper could give no recognizable description. She had asked when the night train to Dover went, and after dark she and Nina had driven to London Bridge, and her companion took two first-class tickets for Dover, when they went on the platform. F—— had traced the lady and her foreign attendant easily so far. The guard of the Dover mail had noticed them, had seen the attendant open the door of a first-class carriage as the second bell rang, but he could not say he actually saw them enter it, or get out anywhere on the journey. There was no doubt that Nina had gone to Dover, and F—— had followed directly. But he was at least fourteen hours behind her, and he could find no trace of her or her companion.

“And I am afraid, sir,” he concluded, “that the lady has contrived to change her dress and make good her escape to France. Have you the least idea who her companion could be?”

“What was she like?” said I.

“Well, sir, Mrs. Harper couldn't say. Some people really don't make any use of their eyes. She was tall, she said, as tall as her lodger—Miss Nina Lennox, you know, sir—and slight; but she wore a large dark cloak, with the hood drawn right over her head, and hiding her face pretty nigh.”

“Oh, then she was not a lady?” said Georgine.

“No, ma'am; not by her dress, at any rate. She spoke like one, the woman said; but, then, some of these foreigners have such a grand air about them. Then, sir, you can't guess who she might be?”

I had been ransacking my brains and memory.

“No,” I said. “She knew no one who knew of her flight. She must have hired some girl to go away with her, so as to put us at fault.”

As I spoke, the door opened and my brother Walter came in.

“Look here, Casper— Oh, Mr. F——, good-evening. Look here, Cas; read it aloud for mother. Dora got it by post, and I came here directly.”

I read aloud:

“‘All pursuit after Miss Lennox is useless, as she is beyond it. Her friends may be easy about her, as she is staying with a faithful friend, who hopes soon to persuade her to seek your protection.’”

“Sir, permit me to see that letter.”

I handed it to him, and watched him anxiously. He shook his head.

"It gives no clew, sir; none at all. The writing is disguised, evidently, and the postmark 'London' tells nothing, except that the letter was posted here."

"Then," said my mother, "the writer is in London, and my niece, too; she never went to Dover."

"That may or may not be, madam. The postmark only proves that the letter was posted here."

"But can we take it as any relief to our anxiety?" said I, impetuously.

"Well, sir, my own opinion is, that you may. If you'll excuse me, I never thought the lady in much danger of harm, because, from what you said, she knows what she is about; and when her money was gone, and she found herself really adrift, she would come back: most do, sir, that run away like that."

I knew Nina better than to take such hope, but I only told him to do nothing more till the morrow, when I would see him, and he departed.

"I tell you, Casper," said Falconbridge, "that you had better stop this pursuit if the child is ever to return to me, even; to your roof she never will."

"She shall, as my wife!" I broke in, "if not before."

"Oh, bah!" said my brother, contemptuously. "Don't talk heroic nonsense, Casper. You know well enough that neither you nor laws of guardianship can do much against a determined woman's strong will."

A passionate retort was on my lips, when my mother touched them.

"Casper, forbear your temper, for my sake. Make her your wife presently; and, Walter, remember how a man or woman suffers whose love is rejected!"

"I do remember, mother; I make every allowance, but Casper was unmanly to speak to the child as he did. Tell a girl she *shall* be your wife! he deserves to lose her; as he will," he added, turning to go.

"As I will *not*, by God!" said I, furiously.

"Eh, Casper," said Walter, pausing, "you can swear by the God you disbelieve in and scoff at, it seems."

He went out, shutting the door, and I flung myself on a sofa.

"Mother, mother, there is a devil in me!"

"Devil!" said she, with a mocking laugh. "There is neither God nor devil! Will you stoop now in your manhood to these priests' tales? Courage, Casper; you have sworn she shall be your wife. 'Faint heart never won fair lady.'"

This was my mother — this hard, mocking, atheist woman! *my mother!*

CHAPTER XIV.

ANNA WINS BY A COUP D'ÉTAT.

“WHAT a poor weary wanderer!” said Nina, tenderly, as the cameo-seller came in one evening. “What a dear, weary wanderer! Give me the box.”

She lifted the strap off her shoulder, and kissed the patient, quiet face.

“Ah, Anna, while I had the power why would you not accept my offer? I never quite understood that refusal.”

“Eh non, mademoiselle? Because I foresaw what has happened, and would not place either you or myself under an obligation to Monsieur Casper, of which both of us would bitterly repent.”

“Anna, you were right; it would have been too much, and—but no, I won’t talk or let you talk until you have rested and eaten. We will have supper first.”

Anna smiled and obeyed, taking care that Corsare had a plentiful share. Finally she sat down at Nina’s feet, with the dog curled up on her dress.

“Eh bien, mademoiselle! and what would you say now?”

“First, Anna, drop all titles, at least when we are alone; we are friends, we are equals, are we not, dear?” she said, in her winning way.

“Friends? yes; equals only in birth. You have friends; I have none, mademoiselle.”

“Mademoiselle de Provence!”

“Basta,” said the Provençale, lifting her fine head. “I will forget, then, that I am a poor cameo-seller, and remember only that I am Anna de Laval, the friend and equal of Nina Lennox. Have you thought of the future—you, who have never known a rebuff, a harsh word, or an insult!”

“I could bear all that,” began Nina, impetuously, when the wanderer shook her head with a sad smile.

“I know the world better than you do. I know your hard and sensitive nature better than you do; and I tell you, you do not know what it is.”

“But, Anna, *ma chère*, what you can bear I can.”

“Gran’ Dio! do you *want* to suffer as I have done?” said Anna-Marie, suddenly and passionately. “Sorrow will strike you fast enough, even in the midst of wealth. You fled away under the influence of intense excitement, of a mind stunned by a cruel blow; but now that is past. What right have you to give such grief to

those who love you? to lay open to slander the fair name your father left you?"

"Anna! my name!" said Nina, starting. "Who will dare to cast a shadow on that?"

"The world, ever so ready to stain a woman's fame. Madame Georgine's plausible story will soon be found out, and then the world will account in its own way for the disappearance of the beautiful Miss Lennox. Your flight was mad and impetuous—to remain away will be wicked. Go back; go to Madame Falconbridge and her husband; they will know how to protect you from Monsieur Casper's persecution."

Nina had stood looking at her, startled, fascinated by such an outburst from one habitually so quiet and languid.

"Anna, Anna, how beautiful you are!" she exclaimed. "If I go to Lady Falconbridge, I cannot leave you alone to this life of solitary misery, lost to the station to which you were born and bred."

The cameo-seller pressed her hand on her breast, and her dark eyes filled, but she said, in her gentle, patient way,

"I am used to it, cara mia. I have no claim on your kindness."

"Have you not? All I can do—oh, I forgot, I forgot!" she said. "What can I do now? and yet, how can I leave you? I should be haunted by the thoughts of you alone in this miserable room, or wandering in this great London. It comes home to me now as it never did before. Anna, you told me that the maestro—"

"Mademoiselle, mille pardons, not that," interposed Anna, gently. "Come, it is time we started."

"Not to-night, Anna, for you to return to this lonely room. I can't do it! I *can't* leave you so, child!" she said, throwing her arms round her with a burst of grief.

Bitter tears were in the wanderer's eyes, but she firmly unlocked Nina's clinging hold.

"It will be worse to-morrow night; we must go now," she said, steadily, and threw on her mantle, adding, with a faint smile,

"Corsare will escort us in safety. Come, amica mia dolce."

Nina yielded, sadly and reluctantly; and with heavy hearts the two young girls went forth, and took their way through the crowded streets, till Anna suggested that Nina should not go to the Falconbridges' on foot at that time, lest the servants should talk; and then, calling a cab, they drove off at a speed that soon brought them to the house.

Farther than that no entreaties could persuade the Provençale to go; she would only promise to come in a day or two. There was a close grasp of their hands, and they parted; the street door closed on Nina, the cab drove away, and the wanderer stood in the street, alone with her dog.

She looked up at the lighted windows, and saw shadows crossing and recrossing, and heard a child's joyous laugh ring through the open sash.

She turned away, and slowly and wearily retraced her steps,

How utterly cheerless and lonely the room felt! How very bare and cold it was! the very dog whined; and shivering, sick with the miserable sense of loneliness and sorrow, the solitary child crouched close to him, laid her face on him, and sobbed herself to sleep.

MANUSCRIPT XXIV.

A BLOW RETURNED.

As a burning-glass gathers the rays of the sun into one focus, so now all the feelings and passions of my life seemed concentrating into one point; a demon was leading me on, and where would it end? I seemed borne on an irresistible current to a black gulf, into which I must plunge, down—down.

Was Couthon right? is death nothingness? *is* all beyond the grave a vast blank?

Why not? It must be! it must be!

Oh, that I had died when I was a child! Oh, that I had never lived to see this misery and shame!

Let it pass; let me go on with my story.

A few mornings after the receipt of the anonymous letter my mother came in, her face flushed, her lips quivering with anger: I knew the signs.

"Casper, the battle has begun! Nina is at Walter's. I have seen her; she came last night."

"You have seen her, mother, and not brought her home?" I said, setting my teeth.

"Go and bring her if you can," said Georgine, hotly. "I tried gentleness, persuasion, threats. I told her that you would live in chambers, but she interrupted me; she would not drive you from your home, and she would neither eat your bread nor set foot under your roof. I told her I was her guardian, and law would enforce my rights, and she answered, in that calm, dignified way of hers, that she, too, could appeal to the law, and obtain protection; that return here she never would."

"But she *shall*!" said I, striking my hand on the table; "by fair means or foul, she shall be my wife! Who was it she went away with—that foreign woman F—— mentioned?"

"Woman!" repeated Georgine. "It is strange that neither you nor I guessed who she was; and yet how should we? It was that girl, that cameo-seller."

"Damn her!" said I, furiously; "I will let her know of this the first time I see her; but for her, we should have had Nina now."

"Casper, Nina must have told that Roman girl where she was, or how did she know?"

"Ay; and I dare swear she planned that feigned escape to Dover, which, as it was meant to do, threw F—— off the trail. I'll get the truth out of her."

I took my hat and went out, I believe, with a vague idea of encountering Anna-Marie. How very different were my feelings towards her now to what they had been when I first met her in Rome! But I walked the streets in vain, aimlessly, to get rid of thought. I was coming along Grosvenor Street when I met Dr. Harrington. We exchanged a few words, and then, as we shook hands, he added, half smiling,

"By-the-way, I have just met, near the Grosvenor Gate, that Roman cameo-seller whom you saw me speak to in the Gardens some time ago."

"Oh, the Fiora di Maria," said I, carelessly; "pretty creature enough. Good-day, doctor."

And I walked quickly on into the Park by that very gate.

Almost the first person I saw was the Provençale, under a tree, arranging her cameos and statuettes to the best advantage.

She looked up as I drew near, and saluted in her graceful way, but her smile was wicked, triumphant.

"Ah, monsieur, que la Vierge vous bénisse!"

"So, Anna de Laval," said I, sternly, "it is you, is it, who have dared to abet Miss Lennox and conceal her from her lawful guardian?"

"Comment, Monsieur Casper?" said Anna, opening her great, dark eyes, and shrugging her shoulders.

"I say that you, illegally, against law, have concealed Miss Lennox."

"Eh bien!" said she, coolly. "And was not mademoiselle safer with me than alone?"

I was taken aback, but after a moment's pause I said, still more sternly,

"I am not jesting: you have broken the law, and rendered yourself liable to punishment, if I choose to follow it up, as I will, unless you tell me the truth, which I have a right to know. Did you actually go to Dover? did Miss Lennox make you her confidante, or did you find her out? Answer me all that, Anna."

"Sainte Vierge! monsieur is not my confessor, or mademoiselle's," said she, with her grand air.

"Anna, I have spoken—"

"C'est ça, monsieur; so have I."

She did not even look up from the box she was unconcernedly arranging, and my passion was roused by her quiet contempt, yet it was nothing I could lay hold of, for she veiled it under that courtly courtesy of hers which nothing could shake or vary.

"You dare not answer me," I said, grasping her arm; "but I will take means to make you speak."

"Monsieur must be very clever to succeed where even those who had real power have failed," she answered, with the same courteous irony that always incensed me. "Put your questions to mademoiselle," she added, removing my hold with her hand—such a small, delicate hand, that I could have crushed; and then, throwing the strap of her box over her shoulder, she called her dog, and gave me a parting salute and word.

“All your law will not make Mademoiselle Nina return to your roof in any character; all your threats will not frighten me. Adieu, monsieur.”

“Do you think,” said I, with a cruel sneer, that I meant she should take in its most shameful sense—as she did—“Do you think I don’t know on whose protection you rely?”

She turned and looked at me—such a look of dignified withering scorn as I shall never forget.

“Monsieur Von Wolfgang, you are an unmanly coward.” Not veiled under courtly French or graceful Italian, but said in deliberate, weighty English.

I stood looking after her retreating figure as in a dream. My insult was flung back on me, as I deserved, but I neither forgot nor forgave the blow. It was not in my nature.

CHAPTER XV.

“She was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts.”

It was two days after Nina’s return, and Lady Falconbridge had gone out driving with her children, while her guest remained at home alone; but restless, anxious, oppressed by a presentiment of evil, which she could not shake off, she found reading an impossibility, and had just risen to open the piano, when “Mr. Claverhouse” was announced, and the sculptor came in.

“I am very glad to see you here, Miss Lennox,” he said, gravely, as he held her hand for a moment. “Forgive me, if I say that you should have come here from the first.”

“I was wrong,” she said, trembling; “but I only thought of flight—to hide myself.”

“In a most insufficient disguise,” added Stewart, half smiling. “You saw your aunt yesterday—will she enforce her claim?”

“I am in hourly dread of it; she said she could, and would get a writ of Habeas Corpus; Anna de Laval told me something of it.”

“Anna a lawyer! That is a new character.”

“She said that Walter told her, but he says he never did. You are smiling.”

“I told her, so that she might persuade you to return.”

“You told her!” exclaimed Nina.

“Yes; the night you went to Anna’s lodging she came and told me; I saw her write the anonymous letter to Lady Falconbridge, and I posted it myself. Anna told you that she had found you out?”

“Yes,” said Nina, trembling and bewildered, she hardly knew why.

The sculptor rose, and stood leaning against the mantle-piece, looking down in the sweet face uplifted to his,

"It was not she, clever as she is," he said; "you were tracked by a far more astute and clever detective than F——, my friend Cavagnac; it was a week before either he, or I, or Anna found even a trace of you."

A mist seemed to come over Nina, and she lifted her hands before her eyes, as if they were dazzled.

Stewart stooped, drew those hands away, and held them in his own strong, firm grasp.

"Forgive me, Nina; but I loved you too well to lose you, and leave you alone in sorrow."

There is, perhaps, once or twice in a lifetime a moment when existence itself seems arrested by the intensity of feeling that is crowded into that second, and the tongue gives all its language to silence.

Nina lifted her eyes for a moment, and then bowed her face on the hands that held hers, but he drew her to his breast and held her there.

"My life, my only love, my wife!"

That holy word! that beautiful name! blessed indeed the woman who is enshrined in a man's noble heart—his only love, his wife!

"I hardly know," he said, presently—and his soft mellowed tones fell like sweet music—"when I first learned to love you, Nina; it goes back to my boyhood, and has woven itself into my life like a golden thread, or a ceaseless strain of beautiful music. I saw you only that once, but I never forgot you; how could I? You became my inner life, my ideal, my poet-love, shrined in my heart like a veiled picture, an existence of the memory or a dream, whose strong influence tinges a lifetime. Years passed by, and I became famous, a master in my art, and then I fulfilled my promise given to my child-angel. I saw you, and the ideal became a reality; the dream took living form and warmth; and now the boy's memory, the poet's ideal, has grown into the man's deep, changeless love. You know now why I have never married."

She took his hand and kissed it in a tender, childlike manner.

"When I first saw you I was a little child," she said, softly touching his hand now and then, "but I seemed at once to understand you; your face, your voice, every word you had spoken, were graven on my memory. As years went on, though I never saw you, I heard your name, and I was proud of it; your ambition was mine, your fame mine; your memory was never absent from me in childhood, in girlhood, in womanhood; it was part of my being. I knew that you would keep your promise to the letter, and come back, as you had said you would, and when you did—ah, Stewart, if I had been older I might have known then what I do now; my own heart was a sealed book; love for the man I mistook for admiration for the sculptor."

"Do you mistake it now, my darling?" said the sculptor, smiling.

"No; the book is unsealed, and all its language is love," she answered; and the sunlight shone down on her golden head, and fell peacefully on the beautiful face she loved too well.

MANUSCRIPT XXV.

“Hope withering fled, and Mercy sighed, ‘Farewell.’”

My hand fails me before the torture of my self-imposed task, but it is too late. I cannot pause now; yet, if my story should be a warning that may arrest even one on the very brink of sin, the task will not have been a useless suffering.

I tried in vain to see Nina; she would not grant my request; and then my mother, by my advice, wrote to Walter—she was too angry to see him—warning him that if he detained her ward after two days she would appeal to the law, and obtain a writ of Habeas Corpus, to which Nina must submit.

This was his answer:

“MY DEAR MOTHER,—In two days I will withdraw the protection I have given Nina, and yield her to her legal guardian.

“Yours truly, WALTER FALCONBRIDGE.”

“Ah ha!” said I, triumphantly. “I thought law would vanquish him.”

So I said and thought, and once more hoped and dreamed of a future when I should call Nina mine.

The second day came, and about eleven o’clock my mother took the carriage and went to fetch Nina; but I, too restless to remain still, wandered out, I neither thought nor cared where, and I felt surprised when I found myself close to All Saints, Margaret Street. I saw a good many people gathered outside, and two carriages waiting; and as I came up I recognized them: one was my brother’s, the other Stewart Claverhouse’s.

What were they doing there? I turned to a little Arab and asked what was going on in the church.

“A marriage, sir; we’re a-waitin’ to see the bride come out.”

A sudden suspicion flashed over me, and put almost madness into me. I turned and strode into the church. I neither cared nor felt that a hundred eyes turned upon me. I heard nothing, I only saw that group before the altar. There stood Dr. Harrington in his white robes; I saw Walter, his wife, and Doctor John, and Guy de Cavagnac—I even saw Anna de Laval near him, saw them as in a dream, but there—there, no fancy or dream, I saw Nina standing beside Stewart Claverhouse at the altar-steps.

A lifetime was crowded into that moment; it must be now or never. It could not be that I was too late, and advancing to the chancel-steps, I spoke:

"I forbid this marriage! the lady is under age!"

For one second, for a space of time yet more brief, if that is possible, there was silence; then Stewart Claverhouse turned, and said, calmly,

"You are too late; this lady is my wedded wife, before God and man."

That face, that voice—oh, that voice! would nothing destroy its charm to my ear? would nothing blind my eyes to the sublime beauty of that face? On every other there was triumph or exultation. I saw that mocking smile on Cavagnac's sarcastic lips, but on his there was none; calm, grave, almost pitying, but irrevocable, he stood forever between me and Nina.

I dared not face him. I turned to my brother with mad fierceness.

"You! false deceiver that you are! your word is broken, your—"

"Forbear, sir," interrupted Dr. Harrington, commandingly; "remember that you are standing in the presence of God, and hold, at least, some outward reverence."

I turned away. I remember leaving the church and passing through a crowd outside, and after that there is a blank. I can never recall how I reached home, or what passed till my mother returned. I remember that; oh, I remember that!

"And now she is lost," she said, standing before me; "but there remains to you revenge."

Oh, if she had laid my head on her breast, and let me weep away in tears of blood the awful demon that had entered into me! too deep now for outward passion; such gigantic evil is calm above.

I made no answer. I shut myself in my room, and sat down with my head on my hands, not thinking, scarcely even feeling; conscious for hours of nothing but the hell of passions within me, that seemed burning away my very life in their fierce fire. If this were what men call "hell," then indeed I could believe it.

"I HATE that man!" I said at last.

Fed by such jealousy as few know, nursed now by the one relentless instinct of destruction, it had grown with my growth, no thing of to-day called up by this last act, but a deadly upas whose roots went back long years. Had not this man from his boyhood been a living reproach to me? Had he not made me fear him, dread him? had he not even repulsed me tacitly? had he not been my superior, *my master* in everything, and taken from my very grasp the woman I loved? had he not been my RIVAL all my life, in all things?

It lifted its monstrous head in that dark night and stared me in the face, an awful thing of such hideous deformity that I shrunk down appalled.

Did I know its name? did I grow familiar with it day by day, and week by week? did I hug it and cherish it, and never quit it, day or night, till it became my very life, and lost its terror in familiarity? Yes, I knew it now by its own fell name. It took possession of me, body and soul, and dragged me with it, down, down, down!

CHAPTER XVI.

A HEAVY HEART.

"GOOD-MORNING, Cavagnac; where have you vanished to this month?" was the salute of Tom Dacre, one day, as he met the count in the Park.

"To Paris, mon ami."

"Do you know that your friend, the great sculptor, returned yesterday with his young wife? but of course you do. Why don't you, too, take a beautiful English wife?" he added, laughing.

"I will think about it," answered Cavagnac, lightly; "indeed, I have already made a choice."

"No; are you joking or serious?"

The count's laugh puzzled Tom; under all its half-mocking jest there seemed a vein of something more deep and earnest.

"Just as it pleases you," he answered. "I will let you know when it is to come off. Come for a turn." And the two walked on together.

Neither had seen, or if Guy did, he took no notice of, a slight figure standing behind a tree near; but when they were gone it glided away to one farther off, and sat down, covering the colorless face with the little slender hands.

Scarcely more than a child in years, Anna-Marie de Laval had a woman's suffering now. To solitariness the lonely wanderer had grown used; cast literally friendless on the world at barely twelve years old, all the ardent feelings and sympathies of childhood and early girlhood had been flung back on her own heart to die there; love and tenderness had never crossed her path, and often she had looked on it in others with a sad wonder and an aching heart.

Then there came a ray of light before which she bowed her soul; the sculptor found her, and soon a bond of deep sympathy and affection bound the strong man to the solitary child. To her he was some infinitely superior being—in truth, *Il Angelo*—"to her perfect," as she had said, "because she, at least, had never seen his faults;" and the love she bore him was something different to, above, a human affection; it was a pure and entire worship; and hence Casper's unmanly insult had fallen stingless at her feet; her answer had been dictated as much by indignant scorn for "*Il Angelo*" as for her own insulted womanhood.

But with Guido di Schiara it was very different. When she first saw him she was no longer a child, though only fifteen in years; she was in mind, in feeling, in heart, much older; and Guido di Schiara, though his voice and intonation had drawn her by their likeness to

Il Angelo's, was not like him; no—he was a man, and a very faulty man, and therefore nearer to her, more on her own ground. To the sculptor her soul bowed, as to some heaven-born being lent but for a time to earth; but this man had power to win her woman's love and break her woman's heart.

Was it strange? he had always been so gentle and kind; he had so much of Stewart's unconscious fascination and winning power, and she had so little to cling to and love, and was so very young. Was it strange that the very fibres of her heart, half child's, half woman's, had wound closely round this man, with all his faults and recklessness? Was it strange that, knowing the truth now, she should cover her poor, weary face in such an agony of shame and misery as she had never yet known, more desolate and alone than she had ever been before? and her first wild impulse was to fly every spot where she could chance to meet him; but instantly the fine, high instinct of pride and dignity crushed the thought as unworthy; she must bear, conceal, and suffer—the old, sad story,

“For woman the calm and the pain.”

A light step on the grass made her look up with a start. The Count de Cavagnac stood before her.

“Sorrowing, dear Anna?” he said, taking her hand, and his touch thrilled through her; “look up, and tell me you are glad to see me back from Paris.”

She tried to look up and speak, but the heart was full and would not be entirely controlled; the blood flushed over her brow, and her eyes filled.

“My child, you have given me my welcome,” he said, gravely and tenderly. “Tell me why you are so *triste*?”

Tell him! how could she? but she recovered her self-command outwardly, though voice and manner were a shade more subdued and quiet, as he saw.

“Monsieur, I cannot help it,” she said, shivering. “Sorrow will not always be chased away.”

“No, indeed, God knows,” he said, bitterly: “but let that pass. You know why I went to Paris?”

“Yes, monsieur; you told me that you had succeeded in arresting Louis Bonheur's schemes.”

“Ay, I have done that which I undertook, and it is my last professional detective service. I have left it, and stand here free. You, of course, have, as I asked you, kept Monsieur Wolfgang under secret surveillance during my absence?”

“I have done so as much as possible, monsieur; but it is difficult. He has deserted his usual haunts, and shuns his former companions; he rides out, walks out, alone, as he never used to do; he almost forsakes the *promenades* of the parks for the more secluded parts.”

“I had rather have heard of his going mad, the *maladetto*! What does he look like—his face, his air?”

“His manner is that of a man preoccupied,” answered the Provençale. “He looks gloomy, down-looking, haggard; every line

that dissipation had drawn and time smoothed over is brought out and stamped afresh. Several times I have thrown myself across his path, quite by chance, and saluted him; he has started, stared like one roused from a nightmare, and walked on."

"Without a word, Anna? He used to speak to you."

"He used to, monsieur."

There was a slight hesitation in her accent, a droop of the eye, an uncontrollable flush, that for a second crimsoned the colorless face, that struck Cavagnac directly. His brow darkened and he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Anna, you are keeping something from me that I must know."

"Non, monsieur; je ne—"

"Tiens! why did you hesitate and color, and shrink from my gaze? You are trembling now. Anna, that villain has insulted you, and by Heaven he shall answer to me for it!"

"For the Madonna's sake, no, monsieur! let it rest; it was nothing."

"I will be judge of that! Tell me the truth, Anna, or I will have it out of him."

She shrunk from his touch, and her lips quivered painfully as she said, in a low voice,

"It was after mademoiselle's return he met me, and tried, by persuasion and threats of law, to make me tell him about her. I refused, and told him all his law would not force mademoiselle to return or frighten me; and he answered, with a look and a sneer that no woman could mistake, 'Do you think I don't know on whose protection you rely?' I turned, and told him deliberately, 'Monsieur Von Wolfgang, you are an unmanly coward!'"

"Curse him for a dastard! he shall answer for his insult!" said Guido di Schiara, setting his teeth. "Dishonored villain, to take advantage of one he believed a defenceless stranger!"

"Who is defenceless, save by her own dignity," said Anna de Laval, firmly; "and for my sake monsieur must let that be my sole protection, and pass by the insult for what it is worth; Monsieur Casper would ask nothing better than such a handle. The Count de Cavagnac cannot take up the defence of a wandering Roman cameo-seller without injuring her."

It was a bitter truth, beyond doubt or denial; and he ground his teeth and turned from her, too deeply wounded and pained by the sight of that patient, weary face, and the consciousness that he had no power to protect her—this girl, almost child, he loved so deeply, whose very youth and utter friendlessness bound her yet closer to his heart.

It was many minutes before the man could control and crush down the world of bitter feeling, and the strong impulse to claim at once the right of his strong love to shelter her. But something at present still stronger held him back, and he turned to her with his usual calmness—

"You are right, Anna; this time I will pass it by, for your sake."

"Mille grâces, monsieur," she said, gratefully; "but what think you of my report?"

"Anna, it gives me strange disquietude and anxiety. He is brooding mischief, for I tell you there is a fiend somewhere in his atheist's soul."

"Eh bien, he must still be under *surveillance*," said the cameo-seller.

"Mine, not yours, Anna-Marie."

"Both, monsieur, s'il vous plait. I owe the Signor Maestro more than I can ever repay."

Cavagnac looked in her face and gave way.

"Watch him, then; but, mark me, there must be no opportunity for a second insult."

"Non, monsieur."

"I, too, will watch him at hours and places where you cannot; so for the present, Anna mia, adio."

"Adio, Signor Guido."

He held her hand closely for a moment, and then walked rapidly away.

The wanderer watched him out of sight through blinding tears, and slowly took her weary way back to the crowded streets of mighty London.

MANUSCRIPT XXVI.

CLAVERHOUSE OF ERNESCLIFFE.

ERNESCLIFFE HALL! There before me rose the stately ancestral home of the proud and gifted race of Claverhouse. Even in this he passed me. Could Stone Heath Grange boast such a commanding site, placed on the summit of a height abruptly terminating on one side in a precipitous and rocky descent to the sea, and surrounded by a noble park stretching away inland almost to the outskirts of the busy and considerable town of D——? No, this ancient pile and family dwarfed the St. Legers and their humble Grange indeed.

I stood gazing on the scene from an elevated point of cliff, so rapt in my own fierce dark thoughts that I did not hear a step approach and stop; but a shadow fell across me, and with a start I looked round.

Just seating himself on a mound of grass was a venerable, white-headed old man, looking to me something like a very superior farmer.

"Good-morning, sir," he said, with a courtesy which no gentleman could have passed. "You are a stranger here, I suppose? What do you think of that place up there—Ernescliffe Hall?" He pointed towards it, and sweeping his hand round, added, "Most all the land you see, sir, belongs to the Claverhouses."

"Ay; does it, indeed?" said I, well pleased to have within reach possibly more about this family than I had ever been able to obtain, "You know the family well, then, friend?"

"Yes, sir. I'm seventy-two come next Halloween, and I and my forefathers have been their tenants for centuries. Why," said he, resting his hands on his stout oak stick, "I can remember the grandfather of the present lord."

"Present 'lord!'" said I, in surprise.

"Your pardon, sir; it's what we call 'em. They're lords of the manor."

"I see. Then you knew the present lord's father, too?"

"Ay, ay, sir. I mind his birth, for I was thirteen years old. He had a long minority, which is generally a bad thing."

"Very bad; was it so here?"

"No, sir; for there was a guardian who knew what he was about, and then the young man, Graham Claverthouse, was very clever—they're a clever race, sir, and always have been."

"I have seen a portrait of him in London; a handsome man."

"They've always been a handsome house, sir."

"Was he liked here?" said I.

"It would be hard to say, sir. He was, in his earlier life, till he fell in love with a lady who refused him. He was still under age, but it altered him, I think, and brought out a latent, stern harshness of temper that brought about mischief afterwards."

I was getting very much interested, and as he paused I said,

"Mischief! Then there have been troubles?"

"Eh, where is there not, sir? Well, the young master went away and never came near the place for three years, and then he brought home a bride, a young thing of seventeen—Cora Egmont, daughter of Sir Guy Egmont. She was, sir, the most beautiful woman I ever saw, and as good as she was lovely, and accomplished; but she wasn't happy, sir, for all that: beauty and wealth and high blood don't make happiness, sir."

Did I need telling that?

"Wasn't her husband kind to her then?" I asked.

"She had everything, sir, but his love; and, besides, he wasn't kind to her about the children. It seems like yesterday that the heir was born up there, in a room facing the sea."

"Here?" said I. "I understood that Mr. Stewart was born in the family house in London."

"*He* was, sir; oh yes, he was; but the heir was born here. Mr. Stewart isn't the eldest born; he's the fourth and youngest."

"I suppose, then, that the mother was happier after her son's birth?"

"Ah, sir, no; it's a sad story."

"Poor thing! he died young, I suppose?"

"Young, sir, but not in infancy. He was christened, sir, down yonder in Ernescliffe Church, after her father, Guy Egmont. How she loved that boy!"

"Was he handsome?"

"He came of a handsome house, sir, on both sides. He was a princely boy—one, too, you might lead, but never drive; a wild, bold, high-spirited boy, that nothing could tame and nobody manage

but his mother. His father hadn't a notion of anything but the old-fashioned, imperious, harsh system of training, and wouldn't hear of any other; it was spoiling him, he said. But his way was ruinous to a temper like Guy's, and at last it came to an open defiance, about some trifle, too, which made it worse."

"What age was the boy then?"

"About eight years old, sir, though he looked older."

"Were there no other children?"

"Two, sir; twin girls of five years old. But about the son—"

"Yes; tell me how it ended."

"It was worse, sir, after that; and then I fancy myself his temper got more harsh, and he grew jealous of his wife's influence and love for the boy. He sent him to a public-school."

"Well; but that was right enough," observed I.

"Yes, sir; but it wasn't right to tell the mother and son that she spoiled him, and taught him rebellion, and that he should not see her in vacation. Strange, sir, that some men, clever and educated, never will learn how to manage a gentle woman and high-spirited boy."

"Very strange; but go on. I am interested in your story."

The old man was pleased, and went on:

"Well, he went gladly, for his was a wild, roving nature, always loving change. Mr. Graham, he kept his word, and in his vacation took his wife and girls to Paris; and young Guy, he kept *his* word to himself. He was sent down here with a tutor, but he eluded him, and actually made his way to Paris, though he was only nine years old, and saw his mother. I've heard the nurse say there was a terrible scene between the boy and his father. He wouldn't hear the poor mother, though she knelt to him; he must and would be master; and he sent Guy to a college or school somewhere in Italy, I think; anyway, somewhere right abroad; and he didn't come home again for a long time. Then the eldest girl, Miss Cora, took cholera—it was a bad cholera year—and died, and her twin-sister, Miss Ela, pined and drooped by inches; the mother's heart was broken, I'm sure, with so much trouble. Then the second son, Stewart Graham, was born, and Mrs. Claverhouse was so ill that the master telegraphed to Italy for Mr. Guy, who was only ten years old."

"And was he in time? poor boy!"

"Yes, sir; she lived a week after he got home; and I think her death nearly broke the child's heart. He told me afterwards, one night that I found him lying on her grave, that she had made him promise to love and cherish his brother; and, good Lord, sir, how he did love that little child! Who could help it?"

Again the old man paused and wiped his eyes before he went on:

"Then Miss Ela died, and Mr. Guy was sent again to the English public-school, coming home in the holidays. But his father was worse, and now there was no one to stand between them; and, besides, I always thought he suspected her charge to Guy, and was jealous of the love he bore his younger brother. Stewart, too, was

his father's favorite; and at last one day, when he was about four years old, and Guy fourteen, he let out, in one of his passions of anger for some of Guy's reckless defiance, the wish that Stewart had been born the heir. I heard him, for I was in the next room waiting to pay my rent, which he always received himself. Mr. Guy never answered, but the next morning he was missing. Every search was made, but in vain; and at last the master offered £1,000 for any news of him, living or dead, advertising in the *Times*. A month after it was answered by one of the police authorities in Paris, informing him that a lad answering the description given in appearance and clothing, with a pocket-book bearing the name of 'Guy Egmont Claverthouse of Ernescliffe,' had died of a virulent fever in a low lodging-house in Paris. The master was like mad, and went over; but it was too late, sir. He told me himself that he found the house empty, the people gone, and all he could learn was that the dead boy had been buried in an obscure corner of some cemetery, without any stone. He never recovered the blow, sir—never; the remorse killed the master."

"But he lived," said I, "till thirteen or fourteen years ago?"

"Ay, sir; a ghost, a hermit, a broken, miserable man lived shut up there; and at last couldn't even bear the only child left him. When he was still a child Mr. Stewart was sent abroad to be brought up. Ye see, sir, he reminded him so of the dead son, child as he was, and his mother's image, too."

"Was he like Guy, then?"

"Well, sir, it was singular; not in face so much he wasn't, but his voice and his hands were like him; they both had their mother's beautiful hands and voice."

I started, struck by the coincidence. I had met a man who in those two points was like the sculptor.

"So that," I said, "is why Mr. Stewart was sent abroad: he is more foreign than English, friend. I suppose, so little as he has been seen here, he is looked upon as a stranger—unknown?"

"Oh no, sir; no, indeed. He is perfectly idolized by his people. As a boy, he used to spend his vacation in England mostly, and partly here."

"But till this summer he has been twelve years abroad—away from here; and tenants don't like a landlord who never comes near them, and leaves his affairs to agents."

"Not generally, sir; but the master isn't an ordinary man, nor did he leave us to ordinary agents. In his absence his grand-uncle, Dr. Fantony, who was his guardian, mostly lived here, and took as much care of the property and people as the owner could have done—a fine old man, sir—Doctor John, we called him."

"I was at his school," said I, "at the time that the master was there."

"You were, sir! Then you know him? He is just married—five or six weeks back, it was."

I had brought this blow upon myself, and I turned the subject off hastily.

"Yes, I know. Are visitors admitted to see the Hall, the picture-gallery, and sculptures?"

"They used to be, sir, at certain times, for it's a famous gallery; but it is shut up now for the present, while they are getting ready to receive the master's young wife; they're coming when the London season is over."

I had learned all that Stewart and Doctor John had never spoken of; no wonder. It was a sad and painful story; and now, fearful of hearing about that marriage, I took my leave of the old man and of Ernescliffe. Had *I* any wish to cross its threshold? *I!* with that fell thing that had sent me there! with the demon whispering ever in my ear! I dared not. Some shadow of my former self made me shrink from such desecration. The towering forest-trees, the vast ocean before my eyes, appalled me, and I fled from their presence as if the very waters saw *IT* written on my face, and I fled away back to the crowded city. I had sought solitude before now, now I began to fear it, to fear to be alone with myself. No, not myself, but *IT*!

CHAPTER XVII.

MY MOTHER'S PORTRAIT.

"WHAT, Angelo mio! at work and alone, with only Fidelio? Where is the bella Signora Nina?"

"She is sitting at the feet of Gamaliel," answered the sculptor, looking up, and exchanging his chisel for Guido's hand. She is reading to the doctor now, but they will give me a call presently. See, Guido, I have brought that in here, and hung it where I see it best—my mother's portrait."

The Italian turned and stood gazing up at it, repeating, half to himself, the last words—"My mother's portrait, my mother's portrait;" but his breast heaved, and he walked to the window, silently mastering himself.

"You never knew her, Angelo?" he said, at last.

"Never," said the sculptor, sadly. "She died when I was born."

"And your father was not fond of you?"

Stewart shivered. "No; he had not loved my mother."

"Can you remember your elder brother, whose unhappy story you told me long ago?"

"I was barely four when he died; but I have a curious, dream-like memory of a brother I loved and clung to the night he ran away, and nothing will ever persuade me that it was a dream. He came to my little bed and wept over me, as only a broken heart can weep, and whispered that while he had life he would keep his pledge to our mother."

Stooping low over the dog, Guido di Schiara said,

"He kept his pledge strangely, to run away and leave his charge."

"Amico mio, not even you must speak one word against him."

"What!" said the other, lifting himself, with a sudden gleam in his dark eyes; "do you, then, love his mere memory so much?"

Stewart looked up, but that face baffled even him.

"Yes; have *you* never worshipped a memory?"

"God knows—yes; *my mother's*," was the answer; then a quiet question:

"Angelo, do you love the dead brother more than the living Guido?"

The sculptor dropped the chisel and held out his hand.

"No; dead or living, I could not give him greater love than I bear you. Ah, Guido, why did you ever let me mourn your death for more than twelve years?"

For one moment the Italian seemed to hold his very breath; then he laid his hands on Stewart's shoulder, and looked straight into the deep, sorrowful gray eyes.

"Swear by all you love most, living and dead, by all you hold sacred, to keep my secret."

"I swear!"

Guido di Schiara laid his hand on Stewart's, and drew him to the picture of Cora Claverhouse; and, like an echo of his own voice, three soft words fell on the sculptor's ear:

"*My mother's portrait.*"

The sculptor turned, and looked in the dark, foreign face.

"Guido, my brother! my mother's son!"

Those strong hands were locked in an iron clasp, and the face of the younger brother was bowed on the breast of the elder.

There stood the two sons before the portrait of the dead mother, whose heart had broken long ago.

"Have I kept my word to *her*? have I not loved you? do I not love you better than life?" the elder said at last, brokenly.

Stewart lifted his beautiful face and smiled; that face and smile his mother's over again: so like, that it broke down the remaining self-control of Egmont Claverhouse.

"Oh, Stewart, Stewart! you are too like her! you have made me tell you what should have died with me. I have dreaded this for years; the fear of it made me an exile from you, the only one I loved, for nearly thirteen years."

"Guido—"

"Yes, call me so; the name you have loved me by, more dear and familiar than my own; to you alone your brother; to the world the Italian Guido di Schiara, the name I have borne so long and will bear to my grave."

The sculptor started.

"Was *that* your secret? No, before Heaven, Guido, you are the elder, and must reassume the rights of the first-born. You are Claverhouse of Ernescliffe; not I, the youngest."

"Angelo, you cannot break your oath. You swore by the mother who bore us both, by all you hold sacred, and I hold you to it. I voluntarily and gladly resigned my birthright to you when I was

but fourteen. Guy Claverhouse died, and to the world is dead forever; and under the same seal I will trust the secret to your wife and Doctor John; but—nay, hear me out,” he said, laying his slender hand on his brother’s shoulder. “I swear solemnly, before Heaven, that the hour in which the secret of the rights I have resigned passes your lips, will be the last hour you will see my face on this side the grave. I have sworn, and you know me, that I will keep that oath, cost me what it may. Mine has been a life of sorrow and trouble, and it should not be your hand that exiles me forever from the little I love.”

‘But, Guido, Guido,’ pleaded the younger brother, deeply troubled, “how can I live, knowing that I am doing you and yours such injustice?”

“Me and *mine*?” repeated the other. “I have no ‘mine’ save you. There is neither man nor woman who cares whether I live or die; no being whom I care about, if that were all.”

“All? you, too, will marry; perhaps have children,” said Stewart; “and then—”

A sudden shadow fell on Guido’s handsome face.

“If ever I marry,” he said, “my wife must be content to rank as Countess di Schiara.”

“But, Guido—”

“Basta, basta! you are paining me, fratello mio. Once and for all, is it peace or war? must I go, or remain on my own terms?”

“Remain on any terms,” was the answer; “to part forever, to know you were living, and separated hopelessly, would be more than either of us could bear.”

“It would, indeed, be too much, Angelo. Now, listen. You know from others the story of my boyhood, up till the night I ran away. Ah, it was no dream that I hung over you, and wept over you such tears as leave their traces in a life; but I had made up my mind from the moment father uttered those words, ‘*You* have ever been a rebel, a misery! I would to God that Stewart had been my eldest born!’ I could love and cherish you under another identity, as I have done; and if I were dead, it left you the heir—and I disappeared. I took some money, and made my way to Paris, meaning to pass through and leave my death to be inferred from my complete disappearance.”

“But how you escaped the search made for you, Guido, is a marvel.”

Guido laughed slightly.

“I have often told you I was born a detective, and therefore the same instincts enabled me to guess at and baffle detection. You will wonder how I died of fever.”

“I do.”

“Le voici, mon frère. In Paris I hid myself in an obscure, not to say low, lodging-house, in a low quarter; and a day or two after a fever got into the house, and many of the *locataires* died. I shared a small room with a lad about my own age and size; in fact, who answered equally well with myself to the advertisement description.

of me—you know how loose they are. I have it now by heart almost: 'A tall slight lad of fourteen, with delicate features, large, brilliant dark eyes, curling coal-black hair, very dark, foreign looking,' and my dress followed. Now, though the Savoyard was not one bit like me, the description answered, as I perceived. *Pauvre garçon*, he took the fever, and died one night in my arms. Then an idea struck me, for I was desperate and reckless. I dressed the poor boy in my clothes, put my pocket-book upon him, and money enough to bury him, took his clothes, and effected my escape; *viola tout*, the Savoyard went away, the English boy died of fever; it was very simple."

"Guido, how you have suffered!"

"Suffered!" He stopped, almost choked by a world of emotion. "Well, well, it is past now. I fell on my feet, one way or the other, in the long-run."

"Where did you get the name under which I first met you in Italy?"

"Count Guido di Schiara? Oh, I got that about six months after my flight. I had worked my way to Italy—to Rome—and had the luck to pull an old gentleman out of the Tiber. He took a fancy to me, because I was like his only son whom he had just lost. He was '*un baron du pain sec*'—a count certainly, but poor, and had neither friends nor relations; poor old man, he only lived a few months, and dying, left me all he had, a few hundred scudi, his old name and his title, till any one claimed it. My life has been a strange one of struggles and changes, and wear and tear, imbittered at the very outset; but I was born a reckless, wild dare-devil, and such I have lived. It is a wonder that it has not been knocked out of me, a still greater wonder that all vestige of good was not worn out; but you, Stewart, saved me. Ah, many a time in that long twelve years I was near you, but I dared not trust myself to return. I had so nearly betrayed myself—not once, but many times—that I feared my own power of command. Then I met that child, Anna-Marie, and she spoke of, called you by the name I had given you."

"And you came back to me for rest," said the sculptor, with his gentle smile; "yet, like me, you cannot long remain quiet. We are restless, wandering spirits, *caro fratello mio*."

How softly and tenderly the words came from his lips! how still and peaceful it was! There was music in the very hum of the summer insects.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER TWENTY-THREE YEARS.

“Feelings of sadness round me now throng.”—*Italia*.

THE gorgeous autumn sun blazed down on sea and land, and threw the shadow of the lofty cliffs over the rocky beach and rippling waves. It fell on the grand old forest trees and wide lands and stately towers of Ernescliffe, with its princely site and sweep of marble terrace, whose whiteness gleamed dazzlingly in the sunlight, in strong contrast to the soft green foliage and gorgeous coloring of the flowers in the gardens about and below it. But the deer were not the only living creatures in the park, for under the trees came a tall dark figure, with a tread so light that it did not even frighten the timid animals; it came on swiftly to an open space where the view of the Hall opened full, and near an old blasted oak paused.

There stood Guy Claverhouse, a wanderer, an exile, a stranger on the very lands of his forefathers; there, on the very spot where, three-and-twenty years before, he had paused reckless, almost broken-hearted, and looked his last on the home where slept his idolized brother; where his worshipped mother had lived and died; those for whom at fourteen years he gave up everything, and became as one dead; wild, restless, wayward was his nature, but noble, indeed, capable of such grand self-sacrifice.

There once more he stood, a bearded man, so altered and changed by twenty-three years of hardship and struggle and suffering, that none would have recognized in this Italian stranger the boy-heir of Claverhouse they had known so well.

There was the broad terrace where he had played with his infant brother or walked with his mother; there the nursery window, the very iron bars still there; and that, more than all else, broke the strong man down. How many, in after-years, have looked with blinding tears on that simple thing, *the nursery window*! what a host of memories crowd round it! “shades that will not vanish.” No other eye, perhaps, could mark it out from those near it, but you would know it among twenty through fifty years of time and change; and Guy Claverhouse bowed his stricken head on the riven oak, and his whole form shook with sobs of such passionate agony as even the man’s iron will was powerless to subdue for a long time. Memory for him was very bitter and sorrowful, but there was no regret for all he had resigned and laid down with infinite love at his brother’s feet. His birthright, unlike Esau’s, was a free gift.

Every onward step brought back the past; but he had mastered himself now; and when he entered the gardens and ascended the

terrace he was calm, though every familiar stone, every well-remembered piece of furniture, tried him afresh.

But light as his step fell on the marble, the ear of affection detected it, and from an open window came the tall, graceful form of the sculptor.

"Guido mio, I knew I could not mistake your step, though we did not expect you so soon."

Their hands met in silence for a minute; and then, perhaps to veil deeper feelings, the count asked,

"And where is Doctor John and the Lady of Ernescliffe?"

"The old man is somewhere in his beloved hot-houses—I will send for him; and Nina—"

"Is here to welcome Guido," said the sweet, gentle voice; and with out-stretched hands his brother's young wife met him.

He took those hands in both his own, and, holding them, stooped and kissed her broad clear brow, gravely, tenderly.

"Sweet sister," said the musical tones that were so like her husband's, "thus I at once give and receive a welcome to Ernescliffe."

"It should have been otherwise," said Stewart, almost under his breath; "it should have been far otherwise."

"Hush!" said the other, slightly raising his hand. "Guy Claverhouse died three-and-twenty years ago, in his boyhood."

Three-and-twenty years ago! How far away his boyhood seemed, dim and shadowy as in a mist, seen as in a glass, darkly. So have many looked back on their youth, but few, perhaps, with so strange a story as Guy Egmont Claverhouse, once a mother's darling and heir of an ancient house; yet now, as he stood there, with those wide domains before him, now, when he had renounced forever lands, name, and nation, he had never felt so proud of his ancient name and blood, never been so proudly, exultingly conscious that he stood there an English gentleman. He might look like and pass for an Italian, but nothing could undo his English blood and nation.

It was a curious smile, pleased, yet sad, that crept over his handsome mouth as he heard the doctor's voice ask some one "where was Mrs. Claverhouse," and Luigi Padella's answer, "The signora is on the terrace, I believe; the Conte di Schiara has come."

And the next minute Doctor John came quickly up to give his warm welcome in words to Guido di Schiara, in truth to the dead Cora's first-born son, whose childhood he had scarcely known.

* * * * *

It was a quiet, still evening—the dead, lurid stillness of the calm before the storm; not a breath of air stirred the leaves or glassy sea, whose mighty waters rolled with a long, ceaseless swell on the rocks with a low, ominous moaning; and the moon shone down cold and calm from the blue, dim distance, cloudless save for a low black bank along the horizon, and a little cloud like unto a man's hand high up in the heavens.

The sculptor, standing on the terrace, pointed to it.

"See, Guido, the gale is coming; and, hark! there are the sea-gulls screaming, that strange, weird cry; and how the sea moans and wails

for those who will never come back to the shore, perhaps. I wonder," he said, leaning on his brother's shoulder, and turning his deep dreamy eyes eastward—"I wonder how many will look their last on that grand old sea to-night!

"The ocean old, centuries old,
Strong as youth, and as uncontrolled."

Ah! there the poet forgot that God holds the mighty waters in his right hand—"even the winds and the sea obey him."

His voice was very soft and low, and he stood looking out to sea with a strange, rapt expression, such an unearthly light and beauty in his face that a sudden pang went to Guido's very heart. All that day there had been a heavy shadow, a presentiment upon him as if something dark was nigh at hand, a sadness and gloom he had veiled but could not shake off his mind. "It might be the subtle influence of the coming storm," he muttered, and tried to put it from him, as if that were possible.

He did not answer—he could not; and both stood silent a long time, dreaming dreams, perhaps, for which language has no words, till at last, without moving his hand from its resting-place, or his eyes from their long, steadfast gaze, that saw so far beyond the blue sea, Stewart said, very softly, in the liquid tongue of his brother's adoption,

"Guido, there seems to have come into my spirit to-night something strange and peaceful that I never felt before. Look at that silver moonlight on the sea; does it not seem like a bright path into heaven, easy to tread by faith, as Peter did?"

"Easy to you, Angelo." He stopped, and lifted his hand to cover his lips, quivering with such emotion and sickening vague dread as he dared not even think of.

"I wish," said Stewart, suddenly, "that Anna-Marie would take my offer at once; it grieves me, it pains me to leave her as she is, owing her what we do. It is wrong of her, but she again refused Nina's entreaty, refused me. 'Not yet,' she said, in that sweet, pleading way of hers; 'give me a little more time.' It troubles me, Guido. She is changed, too, of late; a patiently sorrowful face hers always was, but now it wears a look of yet deeper endurance and pain. I must get the truth out of her, or perhaps Nina can; but"—and his brow grew dark—"if any man has insulted that child, or trifled with her, he shall answer to me for it."

"If any man ever harms that child I will kill him," said Guido, sternly and deliberately.

The sculptor turned, and looked steadfastly in his brother's face, and then slowly a smile came over his own.

"I thought it long ago," he said. "We two can read each other, though others cannot; and I thought long ago that you, who never before in all your thirty-seven years bowed to woman, have given all the love of your strong manhood to this lonely, unprotected child."

"Ay," said Guido, almost passionately; "just because she is so alone and unprotected—because she is a child and not a woman—

she has strangely wound herself into my heart. She has had her way too long; she has refused you and Nina; but me—she shall hear me; seared as I am, she will let me in time win her love; give me the right to protect and shelter her with my name and love, for none other will Guido di Schiara call wife.”

“Guido di Schiara!” repeated the sculptor; “no, that cannot be. I cannot suffer such injustice. Is your wife to know you only by a false name? Are your children to be disinherited—and for me? never!”

“Listen to me,” said the elder brother, calmly. “What I have said I have said, and mean, as you know of old. You wrong Anna-Marie. If she could not take me for myself as I should her, she should be no wife of mine. If she gives me the blessing of her love I will marry her far away privately, under my own name; and publicly from here, if you will, under the name I have borne and will bear, and which my children must bear after me. If my marriage were to force upon me what I have renounced, I tell you I would never see her face again; I should become in very truth dead to you all; and you know what *that* would cost me, Angelo mio.”

“Guido, Guido, it is too much sacrifice,” said Stewart, hoarsely; “let me be alone a while.” He wrung his brother’s hand, and turned away towards the sea.

And the black bank of clouds grew darker in the heavens, and the sea-gulls screamed, and the sad sea moaned “for those who should never come back to the shore.”

MANUSCRIPT XXVII.

CAIN.

“By thy brotherhood with Cain
I call upon thee, and compel
Thyself to be thy proper hell.”—*Manfred*.

It might have been years instead of weeks or months since *her* marriage, for all my sense of time and season. It had driven me to Ernescliffe, it drove me from it; but peace and calm had fled forever, and left me to the powers of hell—the hell of my own black passions and evil nature; every passion concentrated now in the one wild, insatiable, remorseless purpose of my life, from which nothing could turn me aside; yet I shrunk from every face as if mine had it written on it. The world should ring yet with the great sculptor’s name as it had never rung before.

There it lay, next my heart, cold and hard, always there now, always loaded; the bodily form of my dread secret, the one thought and purpose that possessed me. I knew nothing else, felt nothing else, lived for nothing else; and when he went to Ernescliffe I followed secretly, his evil genius.

I told my mother that I was going to join Tom Dacre in a shooting visit. One lie did as well as another, so that she believed it; but when I kissed her at parting, if she had only looked into my eyes with something of a woman's tender softness; if she had only drawn my guilty head upon the breast where it had nestled in my innocent childhood, and asked me to lay bare my heart to the mother who bore me, she might have saved me! she might have saved me even then!

I left her and went to D——. It was a town large enough to hide in; and then, night by night, and hour by hour, I watched, watched, watched, till I grew sick with the thirst for revenge, and desperate to execute it. How those days and nights passed I know not. I noted nothing; I was conscious only of that one absorbing fell purpose; the thing that had slumbered fitfully for nearly thirteen years, and now stood before me, encompassed me in the strong life of its gigantic horror. One night only is burned into my memory in letters of fire, and that—O God! O God! if there is one!—what an awful night it was!

So still at first, not a leaf stirred a hair's-breadth; the long black shadows of the giant forest-trees in Ernescliffe Park never moved or flickered in the moonlight. The thick old oak where I lay concealed threw a black motionless shadow. The ancient Hall, with its stately marble terrace, lay before me, so near that I could hear a voice through the open windows—*his* voice, no other was ever like it—singing. Of all things, what had made him choose *that*?

"Ah, *che la morte*." I listened almost with suspended breath to the voice whose strange, wondrous charm had never fascinated me more than now; and when it ceased, it seemed as if the last remnant of good died out from me on the last strain of its mournful cadence, and left me body and soul to evil.

Then I saw him come out on the terrace—the maestro, the great sculptor himself, more beautiful than any masterpiece that even his hand ever wrought, and with him was the man he loved, the man I hated and feared—Guy de Cavagnac. I could hear their voices, soft, low, distinctly, borne on the still, deathly air, not their words, though I could distinguish that at first they spoke English, and then Italian, and though so like, I knew *his* voice from the count's. I watched him, I strained my gaze to distinguish his features, and my ears to hear his words, but only one reached them—the name of Guido di Schiara in answer to the count. This, then, was Cavagnac's real name. I knew his secret; it might serve my turn some day, I muttered fiercely; and then I saw Stewart Claverhouse wring his hand, and leave the terrace. I watched his dark, slight form, moving silently—for his foot-fall had no sound—towards the cliff and disappear over the edge, down some narrow path, perhaps. My hand stole to my breast, and for a moment clutched what lay there; then gliding, creeping, like the serpent I was, I followed, under shelter of the trees and thick underwood which stretched to the very edge of the cliffs. There was a steep, craggy foot-path a little way off, and by it I reached the beach and paused, crouching be-

hind a large piece of rock, of which there were three or four along the beach, within range of my eyes.

Had the time come at last, the moment for which I had watched for months? I drew in my breath and set my teeth hard, as if that could still the wild beating of my heart and throbbing of my brain. Did I shrink now at the last from staining the night with so awful a deed; now, when he stood there a hundred yards from me? Did I shiver when I saw his pale face so beautiful, so unearthly, so doomed? Oh, how beautiful he was as he stood there alone looking out to sea, looking beyond it, seeing what I could never see or know. Did only an hour pass, or a lifetime? did I watch the storm coming up and listen to the sea-gulls screaming as they circled just above the rising waves? did I hear the wind begin to rise and moan along the rocks and sigh in the trees above? did I hear the sea wail and sob piteously, softly at first, like a wailing child, so awfully human in its ceaseless moaning, that I listened appalled? did I see the lurid mass of clouds along the horizon lift and sweep upward over the heavens till the cold, stern moon silvered their edges and threw all else into deeper shadow? did I hear the thunder crash far away, and know that the storm was coming up swiftly now? did the wind shriek it in my ear, vainly trying to scare me? How could it? I, who had grown familiar with it, and hugged the hideous thing close, and knew it by its own fell name—MURDER!

How luridly black it grew, for all the moonlight. How motionless and statue-like he stood. Would he never move? would he never move? A fearful fancy seized me, and shook me with terror—*had he died there as he stood?* I could not bear it; I must see him move, hear him speak once more; I must for the first and last time break loose from the spell of his fascination, and pour out in one torrent the hatred and jealousy of years. The impulse gathered up its force too strong for me, and crushed the barrier.

With my right hand hidden in my breast, I left my concealment and approached him.

He heard the step, and turned directly, his noble form and beautiful face and head thrown out in strong relief against a huge mass of rock some sixty yards behind him.

I stood face to face with my rival, Nina's husband, and in that thought fled the last hesitation; every pulse, every consciousness, every feeling of my being centred into one point; yet I had never so shrunk before those deep, mystic eyes or the grand beauty of that doomed face; never before so shivered at the voice I had once loved to hear, shivered with the fear of its charm. I heard it now, with its soft, half-foreign accent.

"Casper Von Wolfgang, *you* here! how strange and ill you look. Come away with me, for the gale will break in ten minutes; it will be an awful night. Come away from here."

He half raised his hand, that chiselled, beautiful hand; but I recoiled from his touch, and gave full swing to the demon in me.

"If your hand could save me from all the tortures of your fabled hell, from all the thunders of your fabled God, I would not touch it;

you, who since our youth I have sought, yet hated! you, who have repulsed me and evaded me! you, who have been my rival all my life in everything! you, who have torn from me the woman I loved, and wedded her before my very face! Did you dream I could forgive or forget all I owed you? Ha! ha! you told me I had no soul, and you were right. You believe that you have one; you believe in a God! Go, then, tell him this night how Casper Von Wolfgang dares and defies him!"

* * * * *

Did I see the moonlight flash on the glittering weapon? Did I hear the report echo over rock and sea, and see him fall at my feet without a word—dead? Did I hear such an awful cry as I can never get out of my ears, and knew it, through all its horror, for Anna-Marie's? Did I feel her wolf-hound spring upon me, and beat it back with the weapon, till a blow on the head stunned it for a moment? Did I fling the revolver at her, in the mad hope of killing her, too, and fly up the rocky pathway and away, away, anywhere, to shut out that dead face, and that child's awful cry? fly from the sea, from the storm, that broke over land and ocean; from light and darkness, from myself, and oh, God! how could I?

Doomed, accursed forever! How can I bear it, and live? An out-cast, a murderer upon the face of the earth.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XIX.

AZRAEL.

"WHAT a fearful crash of thunder, Uncle Jack! I wish Stewart and Guido were in," said Mrs. Claverhouse, shutting the piano, and coming restlessly to the window. "Where can they be? it is more than an hour since they went out. See, even Fidelio is uneasy and anxious"—for the Newfoundland had followed her with an uneasy moan, and stood half out on the terrace, sniffing the air.

"My child, they are safe enough; you young wives—"

"Don't—don't laugh at me," she said, earnestly. "I have felt so strange and uneasy all day; there is a vague fear on me."

"My darling, you are too sensitive and imaginative; isn't she, Fidelio? See, Nina, how intently he is listening for his master. Ah, what is that for?"

The dog suddenly threw up his magnificent head, with a wild, deep, mournful cry, that was neither a howl nor a bay, but was inexpressibly strange and terrible, and springing past his mistress, bounded forward.

She stood with a perfectly white face, listening, straining every sense of sight and hearing.

"Hark!" she said, suddenly. "What is that? Great God! what is that?"

The tread of a dozen feet, crushing over grass and flower and underwood, and the voice of Guido di Schiara, strange and hoarse:

"Keep him down or all is over! keep the poor dog down, Anna. Go forward, and warn *her* calmly, if you can."

The wife heard no more, but glided, white and shivering, to meet the advancing men, but no word, no sound, escaped her as she saw that Guido, Luigi, and two others bore a hurdle, on which lay something covered with a mantle. She only looked in their faces, and fell back to Anna de Laval, who followed with the two dogs, and in her left hand the revolver. Only the tearless eyes asked the question the lips could not utter, and Anna answered it.

"He still breathes. Monsieur Auguste has ridden for a physician and the priest."

They brought him into the room he had left not two hours before, and laid the motionless form on a sofa, and the servants withdrew, all but Luigi Padella. Doctor John asked the question the wife could not.

"For God's sake, how did it happen, Guido? What is it?"

Nina, still silent and tearless, awfully calm, had knelt down by her husband, removing the mantle, while Guido undid and threw open coat and shirt; but he raised his dark stern face for a second to answer one word:

"MURDER!"

The word penetrated the young wife's ear, and a whisper came from her lips:

"Who? who is—"

"Hush! Casper Von Wolfgang."

"Oh, my God! oh, my God! it is more than I can bear!"

That voice, so deeply loved, reached the dying ear; the lips quivered, and the large melancholy eyes opened once more on the loved face.

"Nina, my heart, I am dying. Give me your hand; lift my head."

She clasped the slender hand that had wrought such wondrous works of art, and laid the beautiful head on her breast.

"Will the physician never come?" she said. "Guido, will he never come?"

The sculptor's low, faint voice spoke:

"It is too late; the wound bleeds internally. Guido, give me anything for momentary strength."

"This, signor," said Luigi, offering a glass containing wine.

Silently the elder brother took it and gave it to Stewart.

For a moment he lay motionless, and then the wine revived him to a transient strength. He half raised himself on the cushion so that he could see his wife's face, and his glance went from one to the other.

It was a strange, sad scene on which it rested. The young wife he must leave, kneeling beside him, his uncle, his faithful friend rather than servant, Luigi, and closer, the brother, the man he had loved all his life, and at his side the friendless wanderer, the horror of that scene written in her dark eyes, never to be effaced while life remained.

He saw it, and the weapon still mechanically grasped by her little hand, saw her wolf-hound, and saw his own faithful dog creep from its side and lay its noble head on his feet, moaning softly, piteously.

It touched them all to the quick, touched him so deeply that for a minute he could only lay his hand in silence on the loving head he could not see for the blinding tears; but he dashed them aside, and still holding his wife's hand, stretched the other hand, first to his uncle, whose grief was terrible to see, then to Luigi, and wrung theirs hard.

"God help you all," he said, "for I know how you all loved me."

"Oh, Stewart! my life, my husband, how can I bear it? Oh, God! how can I bear it? he *must* live."

"Hush, Nina, my darling, my own wife: there is no hope, save in Heaven. I am dying fast." He paused a minute to recover himself, and then spoke again, but the soft musical voice was weaker even now.

"Guy, my brother, after my wife, the one I loved best on earth, my friend through life, give me your hand, yours too, Anna mia. What a little slender hand! See, Guido, yours can cover it as it lies in it. Take it, protect her, for I leave her to you, but tell her what you told me to-night, that I may hear her own lips answer—"

"Angelo, not now, not now," Guido said, hoarsely.

"Hush! forgive me; it is too much, yet I must know. Anna, my child, surely, womanlike, you must know how he loves you. You did not—it is in your face— Ah, well, you are so young—"

"Oh, signor mio, spare me." The child's head was bowed on the hands that held hers and Guido's in one clasp, and her slight form shook like a reed; but Guy Claverhouse, mastering himself by one terrible effort for his brother's sake, self-sacrificing to the last, wrapped that slight form within his strong arm, and stooping, pressed his quivering lips to her brow, sealing her with a holy kiss his love, his wife; and a peaceful smile lighted up the sculptor's beautiful face.

"It is enough," he said, faintly. "Guido—Nina—we shall meet soon; God's will be done." The dark eyes turned to the loved face of his young wife; then he laid his head on her breast, and, with that smile on his face, died.

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CHAPTER XX.

AN OATH.

PHYSICIANS might come and go—he knew it not; the storm might burst, and the war of the elements shake the very chamber, but it could not disturb the dead; the winds might lull with the dawn, and the wild sea abate its fury; but the great sculptor had looked his

last on the grand ocean; the soul had returned to the God who gave it, and all that remained on earth was a murdered corpse.

The morning sun shone into that chamber of death, and on those three who had never left the dead. How calm and beautiful he lay, the shadow of that smile still on the statuesque face, the chiselled features locked forever in the eternal peace of death, that awful word, so lightly spoken, so often made a jest; a fearful mystery, even when it comes by God's visitation—when those who mourn can look upward and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" but awful indeed when it comes as death first came into this world of sin, by man's slaying hand.

Cut off in his glorious manhood, laid low in his noblest years! Still the wife knelt there, motionless, tearless; still the dog lay moaning and licking the hand that could never more caress it; still the brother stood, stern, silent, tearless as the wife; still the poor wanderer, whom the dead had saved from despair long ago, crouched at his feet.

So the light broke and the sun rose, till at last a ray fell on the stricken head lying on the dead man's breast; and then suddenly the wanderer rose, laid her hand on that of the living man, and pointed to that bowed head.

It was white as driven snow!

He stooped to carry her away, but she put him gently back, and lifted her face, the face of a broken heart.

"Hush! it will not be for long, and I cannot leave him. Bear with me; it is only a little while; he said it."

He looked at her, and lifted his locked hands above his head with such a mute, passionate agony as was terrible to witness, for, like theirs, it was beyond all usual sign.

"It is better so," said Anna de Laval, with a calm, stern sadness. "She is right. I know her heart by mine—it is broken, as mine would break if you lay there."

The calmness and steadiness of her low, plaintive tones might have deceived most men, but not him. He read in it, in her dry eyes and still face, how she suffered; but he saw there, also, perhaps by the instinct of his own kindred feeling, the same deep, implacable resolve of vengeance as lay in his own heart. She looked up; their eyes met, and each read the other's soul.

"We understand each other," she said; and it hardly seemed the same Anna of a week ago.

"A wanderer he found me, and a wanderer will Anna-Marie remain till the murderer is brought to justice. Till then we who loved him live for nothing else but that one object."

"In the name of God's justice so be it," said Guy Claverhouse, solemnly. "Here, in the presence of the dead, and of God, I swear that our feet shall know no resting-place, our heads no home or shelter, until the murderer is brought to justice."

"Amen."

It was the wife's voice, and thus the solemn vow was sealed.

MANUSCRIPT XXVIII.

ISHMAEL.

“For a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse.”—*Manfred*.

THE train might whirl me away to vast London, and gain me four-and-twenty hours' start of those who would soon be like sleuth-hounds on my trail. I might fly and escape my pursuers, but could I fly from myself?

Was the demon satiated *now* with blood, human blood, that was on everything I saw and touched? A murderer on the face of the earth! Was it written on my forehead, and whispered in every breath of air? Did remorse seize my red right hand, and hurl me down to the unutterable hell of my own haunted soul? Did I see the knowledge of it in every passing face of man and beast, and shrink in terror from every passing glance? Did I tremble if even a dog looked at me, and curse it fiercely when it cowered or growled, as *hers* had done long ago, as if it scented blood in my very breath even then? Did I stop my ears and shut my eyes, to shut out that Italian child's awful cry, and that still, dead face turned upward to the moonlight, in the locked, grand beauty of death? And how could I, how could I, when it never left me for a moment? Night and day, in darkness and light, in sleeping or waking, I saw it, as I had seen it in the moonlight at my feet, a murdered face.

Can I look back and remember all? Can I forget one hour, one moment? forget I fled from that spot a murderer? fled in wild horror from the shrieking wind and moaning, passionate sea; fled on, cursing the hour I was born, the mother who bore me, the very blood I had shed; stunned, almost mad, at first, till the strong instinct of life, the impulse of self-preservation, seized me? But oh, what it cost me to walk composedly into the station; to remember that if I took no ticket to London they could not trace me there so readily; to face men with my guilty face, and try to look as if murder were not branded on my brow; to stand shivering with horrible dread that every step, every voice, was come to proclaim me for what I was; to be calm and collected, and restrain the horrible impulse that impelled me to look behind me continually, and out of window at every station, under the hideous fear that the murdered man would be there before me, and follow me again; to try and speak to myself in the tunnels, that I might grow used to my own voice before I reached London, and find at last that it was so changed and hollow that I started and shrunk, shuddering, from its musicless sound.

Oh, for one moment of oblivion! Oh, to go back those few hours, and live them over again!

But I had grown more used to the strange sound by the time I reached what had once been my home. I must go there; I must have money. It was still so early that only the house-maid was up, and she stared as she admitted me. I pushed past her angrily, went to my study, and took all the money I could find in mad haste; but my mother had heard me, and as I turned to go, to fly once more, she stood before me.

"Casper! is this my son? What has happened?"

"Stand aside, and let me pass," I answered, fiercely. "You will know soon enough, for all England will ring with my name before this night, and then curse the hour you gave me birth, and yourself, who made me what I am. Stand back!"

She staggered, with her blanched face convulsed, and stretched out her hands; but I recoiled from her grasp with a cry, and escaped from the house, from London, from England, accursed, an outcast, forever!

* * * * *

Let me try and write more calmly, if I can.

I escaped into Holland, disguised and hidden, safe for at least a few days. I tried to form some plan for my safety, but I could not think or keep two consecutive ideas, racked, maddened as I was by fear and anxiety. What were they doing to find the assassin? And Nina—oh Nina! what had become of her? Was I doubly a murderer? I could not bear it. I got the English papers at all risks, and from them learned all.

Long ago—how many years it seemed now—I had jestingly told *him* that my name would yet be famous, little dreaming how fearfully I should fulfil my own words.

All England, all Europe, rang with the deed—and heaped execration on the once honored and stainless name of St. Leger Wolfgang. Men looked at each other in startled grief and horror, as if it were a national calamity; so young, so beautiful, so gifted, the sudden loss of the great sculptor, and that in so awful a manner, was felt as a national loss. I flung down the papers; I could not bear to see his name, to see before me the blackness of my deed; then, as by a fascination, I seized them again, and devoured with my eyes every word there was of him

"whose name
Was written on the scroll of fame."

I read on and started. One paragraph explained the strange likeness of voice and hand between *him* and my enemy: "The large estates of Ernescliffe go now to the unfortunate sculptor's only and elder brother, Guy Egmont Claverhouse, who has for some time been well known in fashionable and *élite* circles as the Comte de Cavagnac."

This, then, was the one they had believed to have died in his boyhood—my enemy, my deadly enemy now. I should know where every blow and search came from.

But Nina, Nina; was there nothing of her? No, nothing; they had noted everything else first, it seemed to my distracted brain.

There had been an inquest the very next day, and an instant verdict—yes, let me write it—of *Wilful Murder* returned against Casper Von Wolfgang, on the evidence of Anna-Marie de Laval, a Roman cameo-seller. And then I learned that that child had from Stewart's marriage-day watched me like my shadow, and scarcely lost sight of me. She had followed me to Ernescliffe, and kept her vigilant watch there, curse her! night and day, she told the coroner, resting when she could. How little I had dreamed that she had been so near that night, the 20th of August; she could have touched me, almost, as I stole into the park. She told them that I had lain down under a tree near the cliff, and lighted a cigar; and that knowing the Signor Maestro was at the Hall with the Signor Guido, she had turned aside, and descended to the beach, where she sat down behind a block of rock with her dog. She had not, she said, slept, except by snatches, for a week, and not at all the last forty-eight hours, so that she was worn out, and, doubtless, lulled by the soft moaning of the sea, had fallen asleep. My name uttered by the maestro woke her directly, and she advanced so as to both see and hear. She repeated every word that had passed only too faithfully, and described my very expression of face.

“It was,” she said, “that of a murderer,” and she had stood ready to let her dog loose upon me, but the whole had passed rapidly. I had been so instantaneous in drawing the revolver and firing, that, swift as she was, she was a second too late. Swift! I could say how swift she and the hound had been, for almost before *he* fell they were upon me.

Shivering, trembling in every nerve and fibre, I still went on reading. Cavagnac's evidence followed hers, but it was short. He had, he said, got anxious at his brother's long absence, and gone towards the cliff to search for him. On the way he met Luigi Padella in conversation with his own attendant, Auguste Morel, who was mounted, having been into D—— for his master. As he came up, they all heard, simultaneously, the shot and Anna's cry, and he and Luigi sprung down the cliff, and there he found his brother senseless, though still breathing. He sent Luigi for assistance, and despatched Auguste for a surgeon, who had, however, arrived too late; his brother only lived about fifteen minutes after they carried him in. I passed on: I saw that a warrant was issued for my apprehension, and that a price was on my head; I knew that *that* came from Guy Claverhouse. I saw the advertisement: “£400 for any information leading to the capture of Casper St. Leger Wolfgang, and £1,000 for his capture.”

And I wrung my blood-stained hands above my head: henceforth my hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against me.

CHAPTER XXI.

REST TO THE WEARY.

WHERE was Nina, the widowed wife? If Casper could have seen her, would he have recognized the Nina he had known in this broken-hearted mourner, still a girl, and gray-haired, so silent, so calm and tearless? She had shed no tears from first to last, but moved about, the ghost of her former self, only she seemed to cling more closely and tenderly than ever to Guido and Anna, to all *he* had loved.

One night—the night before the burial—only one short week since that night, though it seemed as weary years—she stole from among them, and the dog Fidelio followed her, as he had ever done since his master's death.

The three that remained looked at each other, but only Doctor John, at whose feet Anna sat, looking up into the noble, sorrow-stricken face, spoke in a whisper:

“She has gone to him. Oh, if she would only weep!”

“Our tears are dried at their source,” said Guido, in his stern sorrow; “and left to us who live only darkness, and—vengeance. Hark, what is that?”

The dog, who pushed open the door, and came whining up to him, then turned again to the door, looking back, still moaning.

They followed the faithful animal to the chamber of death—those three, and paused within the threshold.

There she knelt by the dead, the gray hair sweeping over his breast, the young beautiful face laid on the silent heart that had loved her so well; the slender hands clung about his, as if they had sought to warm them back into life; and there was a soft smile on the quiet dead face. The poor broken heart was at rest forever. But the dog crept up, laid himself on his master's silent form, and

“With a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick, desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress, he died.”

* * * * *

They laid them to rest in one grave; death could not part those whom God had joined together.

And then at last, when all had gone and left the brother, as he deemed, alone, the unnatural calm gave way, the strong man broke down, and bowing his face on the cold earth, wept such tears as are wept only once or twice in a lifetime. But a woman's tender hand lifted the head, and laid it on a woman's breast, and tears fell fast on it.

"Oh, Anna, my child! my heart is broken: he was my very life!" She only drew him gently away, crushing her own grief, woman-like, to be the comforter in his hour of agony.

"O woman!
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

CHAPTER XXII.

THOSE THAT WERE LEFT.

ONLY eight days since that night, yet it seemed so many heavy years. Impossible to remain at Earnescliffe, to miss every moment the two who were not. The doctor was a broken old man, too old to form anew the ties whose cords had been so awfully snapped asunder. Guido—always Guido now, the name the sculptor had loved—he clung to for the sake of the dead. But he had never known Cora's eldest son in his boyhood, and in his manhood only as an Italian stranger. His object in life was gone, and its light vanished.

"My sun has set in heaviness," he said, with a saddened and beautiful resignation, "and my gray hairs are brought down with sorrow to the grave. God's will be done."

But the heart of the younger man only rose up in passionate stern appeal for justice on the murderer. He had sworn and would fulfil.

The day after that mournful funeral the Provençale came quietly into the presence of the two men, and both started, the elder not knowing, the younger forgetting, that they must part. She was once more in her Roman dress.

"Anna!" said Guido Claverhouse, rising hurriedly.

"Tiens; monsieur forgets that I must go." It was the old quiet manner and low plaintive voice—the manner more subdued and patient, the voice more weary and sorrowful, but still the same.

"Go? Ah, pardon; yes." He turned aside, but the one great blow had almost numbed the heart to any lesser suffering. There was a sense of dead blank loss, a dull, aching, ceaseless anguish, an utter weariness and restlessness that made even this bearable, which before had been torture.

But Doctor John looked from one to the other in pain and surprise.

"You cannot mean it, Guido, to let this child, *your wife*, go forth a wanderer?"

"She cannot stop here; the world would talk."

"Wed her, then, at once. It is what *he* would have wished. Guido, if you do not!—Do you love the child?"

"Do I not?" he said, passionately. "See how I love her!" He drew her to his breast, and kissed her eyes and lips. "And yet she must go. We have sworn that we will know no rest or home until

justice is done. We must go separate ways, each a wanderer, seeking till we find."

"But, Guido, Guido!" said the old man, deeply distressed, "trust it to those whose calling it is."

"I do; it is my calling. I have been a detective for years, and, perhaps, a better one than these. They have failed; they are, at least, at fault. See, I heard this morning the detectives have tracked him to London, to his own house, and from that to Holland, then to Baden, and there they have lost him utterly, almost hopelessly, though they are still searching. Well, he may baffle them; but, by Heaven! he will not escape me or this child. Listen, Anna mia. Take this purse, go to London, and to-morrow evening come to the house in — Square; I shall be there. And God keep thee, my own Anna, my darling."

She drew herself gently from his hold, and kissing his hand with a strange mixture of love and reverence, turned and knelt at the doctor's feet; and it seemed at once graceful and natural for the young slender girl to kneel before that venerable and stricken old man, and ask him humbly,

"Are we wrong?"

"No, my child. Go; and under God's laws obey in all things the man whose wife you are before Heaven. Your hearts have judged right: there can be no marriage while an unavenged murder lies at the door. But that strange decision—Guido, it should not be; speak to her, use your authority, and forbid it."

Guido folded his arms tightly across his breast. It was one more torture, one more stab.

"I have no authority over her actions," he said, turning aside. "Ask her whether I have pleaded or not, and how she answered me."

She gave him a pained, troubled look, and clasped the old man's hand, speaking earnestly and firmly:

"Monsieur, hear me. Kneeling beside *him*, I swore before God that 'a wanderer he had found me, and a wanderer I would remain until justice was fulfilled.' Dare any man forbid me to keep that oath? Guido knows that my heart is at his feet, but he knows that it would kill me to remain inactive here. Exonerate him of fault, if fault there is; he has pleaded, and would use authority if he had it. He only endures what he has no power to stop."

"Endures—yes. I see all now; but, my child, you are trying him very much. Is it right?"

"Ah, monsieur, he has forgiven me; it is for Il Angelo's sake," she said.

If the man she loved had failed to move her, how could he hope to do so? He only kissed the young face tenderly and gravely, and Anna de Laval went forth from the desolate house of mourning once more a wanderer, her dog her only companion.

It was not till after dark that the cameo-seller went to the old familiar house, now so changed. The hatchment told a sad story in itself.

Luigi Padella admitted her. "The Signor Conte," he said, "was waiting for her in the library," and ushered her in. Guido received her gravely, and went at once to the hard facts with which they had now to deal.

"I have," he said, "arranged all my affairs, and of course left Doctor John at the head of everything. He will live here, our headquarters, so that, when ignorant of each other's movements directly, we can always write to him, and through him, and for money also: remember, you are to send for that as if you were already my wedded wife; promise me."

"I promise you, monsieur."

He went on:

"The detectives have lost all trail at Baden, but their proceedings are not under my commands, and are independent of all but their own chief; therefore, I set myself and my private agents to work; wherever we find the murderer we can arrest him, as you know, under extradition."

"Oui, monsieur; continuez."

"There are four of us, besides one who is to remain and watch his mother, if perchance a clew may be so obtained."

"Four, monsieur?"

"Yes; myself, you, Luigi, and Auguste. To-morrow I go to Baden, you to Paris, and Luigi and Auguste will await my orders in or near Baden. Probably one will go to America, and the other to Italy."

"Does monsieur think that Monsieur Casper will have fled to Paris?"

"I cannot tell; he may. We must watch everywhere; and I will give you a letter to the *chef* I was last with, and he will give you every assistance. Beyond that, mark me, you are a free agent; do as you judge best, go where you think best, unless you hear from me; only keep me as much as possible *au courant* of your movements and disguises, and write always in Italian. You have the photograph of him?"

"Yes, signor mio."

He took her two little hands and held them, looking into her large, melancholy eyes with such deep sadness in his own, and yet such love, that hers filled.

"My darling, forgive me; yet one thing let me ask before we part—to meet, God knows when, perhaps never. Anna, call me by my name; tell me that you love me, for, indeed, my life has made it hard to believe that anything so young and pure as you can love *me*."

"Vois tu donc que je t'aime, Guido, mon cœur," she said, softly; and as he bent before her she kissed his brow and lips—the holy kiss of a wife.

And then they parted.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW M. LAMONTE RECEIVED THE COMEIO-SELLER.

THE sun had set, and night had fallen on the gay city of Paris, when a slight, girlish figure stopped before a certain bureau de police, on the steps of which lounged a sergent-de-ville, evidently off duty, enjoying a cigar. The tall, striking face and form, and picturesque foreign dress of the stranger, and the dog at her side, caught his eye, and he turned as she paused.

"Ha! who is it? what do you want?" he said.

"Monsieur le Préfet Lamonte."

The answer was laconic and comprehensive. The man took his cigar from his lips, and looked at the child.

"Hein! enfant, you are curt."

"Pardon, I am fatigued, and I must see Monsieur le Préfet this evening."

The musical voice, the plaintive, weary accent, and young, sorrowful face, touched the man, for the French are a kind-hearted people.

"Ah, well, little one," said he, kindly; "for the sake of your sweet eyes you shall see him. Follow me."

The Provençale followed him silently up-stairs to a large, handsome room, where, busily writing at a table, sat a fine-looking man of middle age.

Her conductor knocked, and entering, said, respectfully, "Monsieur, here is a young girl asking to see you."

"I am busy; send her away — a mendicant, probably," said the official, not moving.

"No, monsieur; a cameo-seller; but she seems very anxious to see you. She looks very different to her class," he added.

The official ears were pricked up directly.

"Peste! well, let her enter."

The man obeyed, and the cameo-seller entered with a graceful salute, which no royal dame of the old *régime* could have rivalled. M. Lamonte looked on the beautiful melancholy face, and all his vexation vanished.

"Well, my child, and what is it you want?"

"Will monsieur read this?" and as she presented the count's letter her dark eyes scanned every line of the reader's face.

M. Lamonte read it, then put it down, took off his spectacles, and leaned back in his chair.

"This letter accredits you, the bearer, as the agent of Monsieur le Comte di Schiara. What is your name?"

"Anna-Marie de Laval, monsieur."

"And your age?"

"Fifteen years."

"I gave you a year over that. Your domicile?"

"Monsieur, I am a wanderer."

"Poor child," said the Préfet, thinking of his own young daughter. "But where were you born?"

"In Provence, monsieur."

"Have you known Monsieur di Schiara for long?"

"No; not for long; about six months."

"You know his history, what he was?"

"Oui, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Bien; I am an old friend of his; sit down, mon enfant, and tell me what you want."

"Thank you, monsieur; it is about the capture of the murderer, St. Leger Wolfgang."

"Ah, I remember your name now; you saw it done?"

The child shivered, but went on firmly:

"There is, as monsieur of course knows, a heavy price on his head, and advertisements for his capture out in every country and city. The English detective tracked him to Baden, and there lost him; but Monsieur di Schiara himself went there, and with much trouble traced him to Vienna."

"And there lost him?"

"Entirely, monsieur; up till now, most completely. Monsieur Wolfgang is no fool."

"Eh, no; he must, indeed, be clever to escape Guido di Schiara," said the Préfet, with a slight laugh. "We used to say he had a magic hand. I have known him a whole year in finding his man; and he will now, mark me."

"*I know it*, monsieur; or I shall."

"I believe that; continuez."

She obeyed.

"Monsieur Guido thinks that Wolfgang is at present in concealment, but may come disguised to Paris; and if so, he will probably frequent the maisons-de-jeu, the theatres, cafés, et cetera, all places of excitement; here is his photograph." She took several from her cameo-box. "Monsieur di Schiara wishes him watched for, he being personally responsible for any expense; vous comprenez bien, monsieur?"

"Yes, yes; but you, too, are searching for this assassin?"

"I am; but there are many places where I cannot go with safety, even with my dog. Monsieur Guido made me promise."

"Ah, that is just like him—a noble-hearted man, with all his faults; he would never put any young girl in danger, even to capture his brother's murderer. Is there anything else I can do for you or him?"

"Monsieur is too kind. Only send any information you may obtain direct to London—to Scotland Yard, and to 'Dr. Fantony, No. 15—Square.' And tell me, where is Louis Bonheur?"

"Here in Paris, under surveillance; if you want to see him, you

will find him at the Café Dusèque. Use my name if you find it convenient."

"Thank you, a thousand thanks; I kiss monsieur's hands," said the graceful Southron.

"I wish you success, de bon cœur. Carry my regards to the Count di Schiara when you see him. Adieu, mon enfant."

"Adieu, monsieur."

And once more the child passed out into the cheerless night.

But weeks and months went by, and still no clew was found, though weary feet went from place to place, seeking the trace that was effaced. Even Guido di Schiara could not find the thread he had lost in the Austrian capital; and the world began to say that the assassin had become a suicide. But three knew him too well to fear that—those two who were seeking him through the wide world, and one who remained shut up in what had been his home and hers—the atheist mother.

MANUSCRIPT XXIX.

"An army of phantoms vast and wan
Beleaguer the human soul."

PURSUED as by a thousand demons, I dared not pause or rest anywhere. Rest! for me there was none; by day and by night in hourly dread of capture, in dread of the phantom that never left me! how could *I* ever again know what rest or peace meant? I had flung them behind me once and for all.

Holland was too near; and I fled to Baden for no particular reason, with no particular plan, save the instinct of preservation. The same instinct drove me still onward, to a capital where my trail could be lost in the multitude. I assumed a new disguise, and fled to Vienna, but I dared not stop even there—his blood rose up from the earth, and cried aloud, "Thou art accursed forever!"

And I fled before the curse as before a living thing.

Disguised so that I might hope to baffle even Guido di Schiara himself, I left Vienna, and made my way, my escape, into Switzerland; and then leaving all frequented routes, I turned aside on foot into the mountains, seeking there some obscure hiding-place, where I might be safe for at least a time. I had money that would last me for a long time, and I hoped vaguely to be able to communicate with my mother, and when pursuit was given up as hopeless, escape into some far-off land.

Let me pass on quickly. Late one night I arrived, worn and weary—oh! how weary—at a small hospice, far away up in the mountains, a lovely secluded spot, to which I had strayed, and where surely they would never think of looking for me, even if they had traced me through all my disguises, from Vienna, or beyond the

Austrian frontier. So remote was this hospice, that the good monks might almost have been in another sphere so little did even a whisper from the outer world ever reach them. I say good monks, and I mean good, though some may smile if they read this. There were only ten of them, old men; but as far as ever I saw, they lived in peace with each other, and in fulfilment of the ministering duties they had undertaken, simply and sincerely; and to me they were ever kind and courteous hosts during the whole twelve months I boarded in their hospice. An atheist I came there, and an atheist I left, sneering, scoffing in secret at their credulity and blind religion, at what they believed their Deity and faith; but though of course it was impossible that they should not find out my scepticism, I took care it should never offend their prejudices. If they had known, if they had only known, that they were sheltering a murderer, would they not have cast me out from among them?

* * * * *

I look back with an intense and sickening horror to that period when Time itself seemed to stand still, and leave me to the awful monotony of solitude, to the fearful companionship of remorse.

At first I had been stunned, blinded; hurried on in my frantic flight from thought; but here—here! Was that solitude that was peopled with a thousand demons, when the light and the darkness became alike to me in the black hell of my guilt?

It grew upon me day by day, and never left me for a second—*his* face, his voice—the ever-living presence of my gigantic crime—“an army of phantoms vast and wan,” it was before me wherever I turned; in the sunlight and moonlight; in the glare of day and in the gloom of night; looking at me through the darkness with those deep, spiritual eyes, whose sad, doomed beauty filled me with unutterable terror; in every sound, through everything, I heard his voice, now far away, now in my very ears.

Was I going mad? Was the phantom only in my brain, or real? Did I try to find oblivion in sleep, and find him there, too, as he had been in life, as I had known him, in his boyhood and his manhood? but ever at his side there was a slight figure, with its loving face and deep-blue eyes. But one night I dreamed I heard the wild, sobbing sea and the wailing wind, and through all that strange, horrible darkness of a dream I saw a grave, and I knew, I thought, whose it was. I knew the sculpture over it was *his* work only, but I was impelled by a fearful fascination to draw near and read the names and dates; *his* name and hers, Nina Theodora Claverhouse, his wife; and the dates seven days between them.

The horror of that dream awoke me, and I cursed aloud in my guilt and misery, for I knew then that she was dead, and murder twice written on my brow!

Had that wretched woman's curse come true now—“There is a devil in you that will drag you down to hell, where you belong?”

Did my brain reel? Did all my German lore crowd month after month more darkly on it? Did I see a murdered corpse wherever I turned, and go about, a fearful, shivering, haunted thing, the ghost

of my former self? Did I know myself, or was it an evil spirit in my likeness, to whom I was sold, body and soul? Did I look behind me, trembling like an aspen, and see no shadow in sunlight or moonlight, and creep away into darkness, that I might not miss it?

Did the past come back to me, hour by hour, and did I hear again my scoffing sneer, wondering dizzily why my voice was so changed? "You are a dreamer, fond of fabled beliefs;" and then, as from a distance—oh, how far off! came his answer—"Fabled, Casper? Ah, I forgot, you have no faith or God—pover infelice." Did I almost shriek aloud, and shut my ears, to shut out those deep, pitying tones? Did I mutter fearfully that I was going mad, that my nerves were shaken, that I was the slave of a disordered fancy? a slave! and then shut my ears, stifle it as I would? Did I hear that strange, soft, haunting voice answer back:

"You, Casper, are the slave of your atheism and your pleasure."

Did I beat my murderer's hands on the floor, and stagger dizzily away like a blind man, and then lift them up and curse God, if there was a God, hugging my dark atheism, as I had hugged that fell thing years ago—long years ago?

Long years ago! yet when I asked them how long I had been among them, they looked at me surprised, and answered, "Twelve months."

One year—only a year! it had seemed a lifetime of agony and torture!

I left it one night, lest its horrors should kill my brain. Excitement, oblivion, or I should go mad! And I fled away into the wide world again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TWO WHO MET IN THE CAFÉ ITALIEN.

ONCE again in Paris, but now the snow was falling fast, and the wind drove it full against the window of an elegant private apartment in the Café Italien; cold and cheerless enough without, though within the blaze of fire and gaslight made it bright. On a fauteuil lay a man's cap, of the kind worn now in the Royal Navy, and a small black velvet woman's cap, with a thick veil attached to it. Their owners were the sole occupants of the apartment—a tall bronzed man of seven or eight and thirty, who was pacing slowly to and fro, and a girl of sixteen, who sat at the table with her face resting on one slender hand, and her dark eyes anxiously watching her companion.

"And what," she said at last, "have Luigi and Auguste been doing?"

The stern brow unbent, and the lines of care and sorrow softened for a moment, at the sound of her voice.

"They have been doing their best—searching, watching, as we

have, but with as little success. No stone has been left unturned; but I tell you, Marie, that in all my experience I was never so utterly at a loss—a dead loss. I do not know which way to turn; it is all darkness and misery—misery! Anna, if I pause, or think a moment of the past, I feel crushed beneath the weight of loss. Time but deepens such wounds.”

“It is a poisoned wound,” she said, wearily dropping her head on her hands. Even the power to comfort was gone from her for the time.

He looked at the drooping girlish form, and heavy tears came into his dark eyes.

“Forgive me, *mon cœur*,” he said, bending over her with inexpressible tenderness; “I did not mean to pain you—the very first time, too, of meeting after so many months. I am selfish.”

“*You* selfish!” She looked up in the dark, handsome face and lifted the soft, silky black hair from his brow. “You are too like *him* to be selfish. Your whole life has been a sacrifice.”

“Hush, hush! nothing done for him was sacrifice,” said Guido, turning aside.

She said nothing, only lifted his hand to her lips in silence.

Life was not all dark and sorrowful while he had her love.

She first broke the stillness.

“You wrote to me to meet you here, but you have not yet told me what you have done. Where did you go to when you left Marseilles a month ago?”

“I went to Vienna again on the chance that, even after a year, I might recover the trail, but I have only found out how our search has been so useless.”

“Tell me, then, Guido.”

“Our advertisements are, you know, still in the journals, and one of them was answered by an English gentleman, personally, in fact, for he called upon me; for he said that what he had to say was so slight and merely supposititious, that he was almost ashamed to trouble me. I thanked him, and told him that to an experienced detective the merest shadow was often a clew.

“It seemed he had just come from a walking tour in the Swiss mountains, and had found his way one night to an obscure and most remote little hospice, where he remained two days. In conversation the monks mentioned a guest who had left them a month before in the night, suddenly and mysteriously, after being there a whole year. He had, they said, never gone beyond the walls, and had shunned even them; had always seemed preoccupied and unhappy; and had latterly seemed sinking into a nervous, unsound state of mind, starting at every sound; evidently in a constant state of dread and fear. ‘No wonder,’ a monk remarked, ‘when Monsieur Schwartz was an atheist.’ All this struck my informant as worthy of reporting, and on arriving in Vienna he went to a bureau de police, learned there that I, Monsieur di Schiari, was in Vienna, and called.”

“Monsieur l’Anglais was clever,” observed the cameo-seller.

"Ay. I left for la Suisse that day, and went to the Hospice of St. Michel, where I learned all they could tell of their late guest, and it tallied sufficiently well, despite his clever disguise. I was satisfied that the bearded, spectacled, middle-aged Monsieur Schwartz was Wolfgang."

"Then, monsieur, there *is* a step gained," said Anna-Marie, with a momentary flush on her colorless cheek. "We are sure he is alive, and once more in the world."

"Ay, and will remain there. I see how it has been: the solitude and monotony of the hospice was more than his guilty soul could bear; and he has fled, trusting either that pursuit is over, or that he can escape it. I was wrong to give way to despair even for that moment," he said, with a sudden gleam in his brilliant eyes; "there is hope now, though he has a month's start of us; he has broken from the torture of solitude, and will seek forgetfulness in wild dissipation; he will rival his early youth, only now he must live by gambling."

"Or get money from his mother, monsieur."

"Mia cara, he may, but I hardly think he will try it; if he does, so much the better for us."

"Guido, he may have fled to America."

"It is possible, but Auguste is in New York, and has been for six weeks. Wolfgang has a disadvantage, not in being handsome, but in being peculiar; his appearance is such a curious mixture of creole and German. If he were fair he could disguise better; by change, not mere concealment."

"I understand you; a fair person may paint or stain dark, but a dark one cannot paint fair so easily; though a young, slightish man may become stout and old, and dark-brown hair like his become fair, or dead black."

"Exactly; but no disguise, I rather think, could deceive you or me."

"Non, monsieur; none. But what if he hides again in some obscure corner?"

"He cannot, unless he communicates with madame his mother," answered the other. "He must have money. I think he will come here to Paris, like a moth to the candle; and I will leave you here, for I must go to London for a few days on business. It is impossible to own large landed property, and spend money as we have been doing, without the master-hand now and then appearing; and Doctor John is not well. Come, Anna, my darling, I will take you to your lodging."

She smiled faintly, as he carefully wrapped her mantle about her.

"Do you forget," she said, "that Corsare and I are always out till late? It is only in darkness that such as Wolfgang dare venture out."

He only stifled a heavy sigh, as she took his arm, and under his care, for at least a short while, left the Café Italien.

MANUSCRIPT XXX.

IN A CAFÉ IN A FRONTIER TOWN.

ONCE more in the wide world, hunted like a wild beast, a price upon my head, fearful of every sound and face and voice; yet my disguise was good, my transformation complete, and the passport which took me over the French frontier in no way answered to the descriptions and photographs out of Casper Von Wolfgang.

"M. Franz Hermann, age forty years, height five feet ten inches, slight stoop in his carriage, reddish hair, turning gray, thick whiskers, mustache, and beard, and florid, brown complexion, thick, reddish eyebrows, arched, black eyes, straight, well-shaped nose, scar of a sabre-cut across the left cheek, and a small purple spot under the right eye, the face much wrinkled."

Who would know in this M. Hermann the once handsome, dashing St. Leger Wolfgang? and I felt something almost like security as I turned one evening into a café in a small French frontier town.

There were several men in the room smoking, talking, and reading the journals. One or two were English tourists, the rest were French, two Italians, a light-haired, wild-looking German student, and one American gentleman—a Southerner, I found by what he said. I took a place apart, ordered coffee and one of the day's journals, and read, the hum and buzz of talk coming vaguely to my ears for some time; but at last an exclamation from the Englishman caught my ear, and chained every sense I had.

"By Jove! that everlasting advertisement again! One is tired of seeing it."

"What is that, sir?" asked the American.

"This one, for the apprehension of Wolfgang, the murderer of the great sculptor, Claverhouse."

"Oh, ah, yes; it has been in the American papers for a year at least," returned the other, while I sat silent, intent.

"Ay, and in the French, Italian, German, everywhere. My belief is, the villain is dead. The devil's got him long since, or he would have been taken."

"It was the most horrible and deliberate murder that has startled the world for many years," remarked a Frenchman. "The poor young wife, too—it killed her, I believe?"

"Oh yes; she was a mere girl. It broke her heart, poor child: she died the night before his funeral."

"What was the motive for the crime?" asked an Italian, laying down the journal he was reading.

"Oh, the old story—jealousy. Wolfgang was a cousin and rejected suitor of Mrs. Claverhouse."

"Do you know, Signor Inglese, whether Il Angelo finished that sculpture he was doing before his marriage—one, I mean, for the principal figure of which the Conte di Schiari sat? or is 'The Wreck' his last work?"

"No; he finished the other shortly before his death, and it was on view in London after that for three or four months. The Duke of S—— offered a fabulous sum for it, but the brother, Egmont Claverhouse—the Conte di Schiara—refused to sell it at all, or any other work of Il Angelo's in his possession."

"A pity; but of course they are visible, for Schiara (I have met him) is too true a lover of art to shut it up."

"He is; they are now in the famous picture-gallery at the family seat, Ernescliffe, and open to the public."

"How came he to be called 'Il Angelo?'" asked the German student.

"Well," said the Englishman, half laughing, "it originated, I believe, with a child, one of his models, the cameo-seller, who witnessed his murder. She found his name, I suppose, difficult to her Italian tongue, and used to call him 'Il Angelo.' The name somehow got into the Italian journals, and was taken up."

"Are they still searching for the murderer?" asked the American.

"Oh no; of course not. These advertisements are kept up by the brother, but the police gave it up long ago, months back; *they* think he is dead."

"Suicide, most likely."

"I don't know. He was a sceptic, a regular scoffer; and I fancy these atheists, with all their talk, don't care to face death. I'd sooner put an army of bold, open sinners on a battle-field than an army of scoffers and infidels."

"So would I, sir. Hadn't Wolfgang a mother?"

"Yes; terrible for her, poor woman! She has remained shut up in her own house ever since the murder. He has a half-brother, too, Sir Walter Falconbridge; but he and his family went to Cannes, and are still there, I believe."

"I wish," laughed the American, "that I could catch sight of the villain; I would earn the £1000."

All this I heard, and turned perfectly sick. I could not bear it longer, and I left the café.

I could not sleep that night. Is it a wonder? My crime stood before me in appalling magnitude; and once more I fled before the hideous phantom, before the mad terror of capture. It seemed around me, before, behind, above, in every face and sound. I fled to Homburg, and flung myself into play; anything for forgetfulness—oblivion. I laughed the loudest, and played the last and wildest; yet I won, and won largely. My tongue was most glib, and my jests the most scoffing; but in the wildest revel I dared not pause or look behind, for it was there—a ghastly Presence, a whisper ever in my ears of what might have been. Oh, for one moment's power to retrace the past, and undo the deed that was done! Oh, if I had only listened in other years to the being who would have been my good

angel; but I would not. I put away the light, and now I stood a hunted felon, mad with the remorseful, frantically futile wish to undo the irrevocable past; alone, in soulless darkness—a murderer.

A hunted felon! What if the police had given me up, and left me to be my own curse? he, the brother, had not; he had distrusted me from the first, and watched me, and him I feared. I knew Guido di Schiara too well to dare to hope: as long as he had life he would never abandon the pursuit.

I dared not long remain in the same place, or retain the same character; but excitement, play, I must have! Better to take my chance in cities and capitals than again face the horrors of solitude.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MAN IN VELVETEEN WHOM GIOVAN' MET.

“BAFFLED, weary, and dishearten'd,”

sick at heart, alone, and sad, the cameo-seller turned one snowy night from the brilliantly lighted Boulevard des Italiens, and sat down on a door-step with her dog, listening vaguely to the notes of an organ somewhere down the rue, playing that beautiful and never-wearied-of melody, “Ah! che la morte.” The child heard at first vaguely, then listening, till the heavy tears gathered in the dark eyes and fell fast on her black mantle. To her it was inexpressibly sorrowful, for it was one the sculptor had often sung for her in Rome, and it was, Guido had told her, the last song he had sung the night of his murder; and, unheeding the cold and the falling snow, she sat with her face hidden in her mantle, not noticing that the sound had ceased, till a sudden movement of Corsare and a man's step in the snow made her look up, and rising, stand still. The new-comer was an organ-man, walking slowly and wearily, with his hands in his pockets, but he looked up at the dog's whine; the eyes of the two wanderers met, and the recognition was as immediate as delighted.

“Giovan' Tofanni!”

“Anna-Marie! How glad I am!” exclaimed the Parmese, clasping warmly the hand she held out. “I thought we should meet again some way or other. Your dog knew me, too, and was glad.”

“As I am; Corsare always welcomes a friend; but you seem weary, Giovan'. Unslung your organ, and sit down.”

“It is too cold; and I do not feel so weary now I see a friendly face and hear your gentle voice. Why do you sit? it snows, and is too cold for such a delicate-looking signorina as you.”

“Thank you, mon ami, I am not delicate: but it is cold—very; I will walk with you a little way on, if you will have me.” She wrapped her mantle about her, shivering, drew closer the black veil that covered her head, and the two walked slowly onward.

"So you are still a cameo-seller?" said Giovan', glancing at her box.

"Yes, how should I be anything else?"

"Oh, *je ne sais pas*," shrugging his shoulders, with a smile in his bright eyes, "only the Madonna meant you for *une grande dame*, not a cameo-seller."

"Thanks. If ever I am *une grande dame*, I will remember Giovan'," said the Provençale, half smiling.

He laughed and touched her dress.

"Why have you abandoned your graceful Roman dress for this black dress and mantle?"

"It is more convenient at present; one does not always care to be so marked," she answered.

"But you *will* be marked, in spite of dress," said the young man, frankly; "you must know that; plenty have told you that."

The girl colored slightly, but she sighed.

"I wish, Giovan', that every one had said it as kindly and harmlessly as you; insult is very painful to bear."

"Ay, but we get used to everything," said Giovan', giving his load a hoist.

Anna-Marie smiled, amused at the thorough man's answer.

"Not that," she said, quietly. "A woman scarcely gets used to insult—it stings each time; but let that be," she added, shivering. "How long have you been here? where have you been all the year since I saw you in London?"

"Oh, mostly in England, or in France. I mean to go further south till the winter is over. One of my companions and I are going down to Marseilles. Why don't you?"

Anna de Laval shook her head.

"No; I must stop here a while. I am engaged to several artists."

"Ah, I wish Madame la Sainte Vierge had given me beauty. Look," said he, suddenly, stopping her at a shop, "here is a face rather handsome, but I would sooner have my own than this—eh?"

It was, among many others, a photograph of Casper Von Wolfgang, below an advertisement for him, that caused the Italian's remark.

"Oh yes, in truth!" said Anna, energetically, and drawing him on again. "He is a *maudit*, and will hang yet for his crime."

"He would thank you. His portrait," said Giovan', "reminds me of a man I saw to-day looking in a *boutique*, I think, at this very photograph. I was playing at a house farther up, and noticed him as I stood, first, because he looked so long in the shop, and because he was of my fraternity."

"An organ-man?"

Giovan' nodded, and said, laughing,

"But he had not been one long, though. He was not used to it, for even as he stood he kept hoisting the organ, as one does an unaccustomed weight; he walked with it uneasily, bending under it, and he was neither small nor weak-looking; and when he stopped at a house to play—oh! *mon Dieu*—I did laugh so!"

Despite herself, Anna was amused at her companion's lively chatter; at least it diverted thought, and was a friendly voice. She encouraged him.

"Was he so awkward, then?"

"Awkward!—you have said it! he was half a minute unslinging; and when he had played the first tune of his *répertoire*, he fumbled at the stops, evidently not knowing well how to handle them; when they paid him he seemed half ashamed, and when he went on again he hoisted his organ in the most *gauche* manner. 'Mon camarade,' thought I, 'I will have some *plaisanterie* with you.'"

"And did you?"

"Yes; I overtook him easily, but first I looked in the *boutique*, to see what had attracted him."

"You were very curious."

"Yes, curious, if you will, but there was nothing that I could see except a picture of the empress and that photograph and advertisement. So I overtook and saluted him."

"What was he like?"

"That is just like a woman to ask," laughed the Parmese, merrily. "He was no beauty, and not under forty; he had long, rusty, warm, brown hair."

"Reddish, in fact?"

"How rude you are, mademoiselle. No, not reddish. He wore all his hair thick, like an orang-outang; he had shaggy, overhanging eyebrows; and his eyes were, I think, black."

"Not as sharp as yours, perhaps, mon ami?" put in Anna, very quietly.

"Not beautiful, like yours," retorted Giovanni. "Mais retournons à nos moutons."

"A moment; was he Italian, this novice?"

"He! no; English, I think. Why do you ask?"

"No matter; continue. What did you say to him?"

"I was very polite. 'Good-day, comrade,' said I; 'are we going the same way?' He did not seem inclined to accept my company, and answered that he was going straight on, whether that was my way he did not know; so, though he evidently wished me at the devil, I kept on. 'You have not taken up this long?' said I, touching his organ. 'Long enough,' said he, shortly; 'this many a month.'"

"Which you did not believe?"

"Certainly not. I had eyes; so I answered, 'Je ne suis pas un blanc-bec,' and asked him what he had been looking at in the shop-window. 'Nothing particular.' 'It is a hard life enough,' I remarked, 'especially in winter; and till one is used to it the organ is a weight. Yours is new, eh? your stops and handle seemed to work stiff, or else you are new to the organ.' He told me, savagely, 'Allez à l'enfer.' So I returned the compliment by informing him that M. le Diable would certainly receive him 'à l'enfer,' and if he had any message for him, I was at his service."

"For which, I suppose, he cursed you?"

"I dare swear it, but I did not stop to hear it. I turned on my heel, and left so surly a comrade to himself. Ah, who is that who saluted you?" he said, interrupting himself.

A middle-aged man in a military cloak, whitened with snow, saluted in passing, but immediately wheeled, and addressed her in a low voice. "Go home, my child; it is snowing fast, and too late for you to be out—after ten. Who is that man you are with?"

"A wanderer, like myself, monsieur; a former camarade."

"H'm," said M. Lamonte, still unsatisfied. "But go home, my dear child."

"Not yet, monsieur," said Anna-Marie; "not just yet, if you please."

The significance in her soft voice, slight as it was, caught his ear directly.

"Eh, quoi!" he said, briskly; "have you?"

"Chut, chut! monsieur. I will, perhaps, see you to-morrow morning."

"Good; at ten o'clock," said he, and walked rapidly on.

"Who is that?" asked Giovan'.

"It is Monsieur Lamonte."

"Sainte Vierge! then are you an agent of police?"

"No. Are you going to your lodgings?"

"Yes, it snows fast. But I will first escort you to yours."

"Thanks; but I am not going in yet. Which way do you turn?" for he had paused at the corner of a somewhat narrow, long street, lighted less by lamps than the glare from two or three buildings, which both knew well to be gambling-houses.

"Down this—it is a shorter way. What! not you, too?" as she still kept at his side.

"Are you tired of my company?"

"No, indeed; but—"

"I am right enough. I know Paris of old—eh, Corsare?"

Corsare licked her hand, and followed close behind her, while his mistress and her companion kept on, though the snow was driving in their faces.

But as they neared one of the maisons-de-jeu Giovanni stopped abruptly, and laid his hand on the girl's arm.

"Look!" he said; "that man in velveteen who has just come out of the maison-de-jeu—it is he—my novice. I know him, despite this blinding snow, for I saw him under the glare of light. I wonder if he has gambled away his organ," he added, laughing. "He has stopped, uncertain. Do you see?"

She stood bending forward, straining her eyes to see the figure he pointed out.

"Peste on the snow and darkness!" she muttered between her teeth; then putting her slight hand on Giovanni's, she said, quickly, "Giovan', if you would do me a favor, go up to him and address him. I want to hear his voice."

"You cannot at this distance."

"It must do; he must not see me. Go quick."

She drew herself and dog hastily under an archway, and Giovan' walked quickly towards the man, little guessing that Anna watched as if for life and death. She saw him pause near the man in velvet-teen, and heard him speak in his jesting, jaunty manner; but the man's voice, as he answered, came indistinctly through the snow and wind. She could only tell that it was gruff and angry, though for all that, and through every disadvantage, something in it struck her finely attuned ear as not belonging to his condition.

Then she saw Giovan' turn on his heel laughing, while the man stood looking, probably scowling, after him. Anna saw him; she would fain have warned her companion to pass the archway by, but she dared not move while the man stood watching.

Giovanni came up, and paused, asking gayly,

"Have I done my duty?"

"Yes, yes; go on, for the Madonna's sake; take no more notice of me; I will see you at your lodgings. Where is it? quick!"

"Number 10 Rue d'Eau; good-night;" and Giovan', taking the cue, walked off.

Pausing at the street-corner, and looking back, he saw, dimly through the snow, the man in velvet-teen walking swiftly away; and he fancied he saw Anna's slight figure and white dog leave the archway and follow; but it was so indistinct and momentary, for the heavy falling snow had so assimilated both girl and dog to its own whiteness, that it might well be his fancy. He could not distinguish them from the snow, and hurried home, wondering who and what this patrician cameo-seller really was.

MANUSCRIPT XXXI.

THE CLOUDS GATHER.

I WAS once more in Paris, the gayest capital in Europe. What made me go *there*, of all places? a fascination, an inevitable fate? I know not. I went because there I could find excitement, because I could pass my days in a crowd and my nights at the gaming-table; not that I dared now to set foot within those palaces which I had frequented in my wild youth, for there might be one chance in a thousand of encountering some who had known me in former years.

Former years! then I was indeed wild, almost a *roué*, but still free, free of blood-guiltiness, still *myself*, St. Leger Wolfgang; now I stood in the same city, a haunted thing, a ghost, a shadow, a devil among men; an assassin, fearful of light and of darkness, of men and of solitude.

I left the German M. Hermann at Dijon. I came into Paris Rudolph Sletzinger, from Frankfort, organ-player.

I laughed in bitter derision at my transformation. I, a common

organ-man! I, who had always despised the whole class, holding them lazy, idle knaves, who took to it because they would not work; I, who had never seen one of them without a sneer and laugh at Nina, because she had always a kind word and often a silver piece for them.

Now I was to find that she had been right; it was work, hard work, too, for those who had to live by it, or follow it for years; walking and standing from morning till night with a heavy load, for a full-sized box-organ is heavy. It came strangely: I felt ashamed, miserably ashamed, in my disguise; it seemed as if every one must see through it: pride of class, the class and name I had dishonored, which crime had not dragged down, was wounded now by this humble occupation; the pence I earned stung my hand, and many a time I would have given much to fling them back with a curse; the instrument, too, pained me to carry, to handle—it always seemed slipping; and the strap pressed on my chest, and impeded my breathing, and, being unaccustomed to it, I felt it a burden every moment; I could not set the stops or hoist and unsling it readily; and it made me very awkward in every manipulation of it, so markedly, that it was instantly detectable by any professed organ-player, for one came up with me one day, curse him! and told me so. I shook him off; how could I bear any comrade when I dreaded every living creature? It was a heavy, cold day, with a gloomy gray sky, threatening snow.

I stood that evening by the Seine, with the darkness above and around me, and the deep, dark river flowing at my feet; it looked so peaceful and quiet. Was "Lethe's fabled stream" a dream of the ancients, or a reality? Death, death! hideous words of terror to me; was death nothingness? Was there no Deity, no future, no soul? What was soul and immortality and future? the shadowy mysticism of my German lore, or— No, it could not be. I dared not think; the grave must, must be the end; to doubt that were perdition.

I wrung my blood-stained hands, and fled away to the gaming-table. I remember seeing a book there, and opening it. It was "Manfred." I saw the words—I read, as by a fascination, that fearful incantation, till the large drops of sweat stood on my forehead; and flinging the book fiercely away, I turned to the table, and played wildly, recklessly, with a mad excitement, that the maddest gambler there never had rivalled. How should they? *they* had no blood to forget, they had no hideous crime to scare them alike from life and death. Yet after a while even the very madness of excitement appalled me, and drove me from the heated *salon*, out again into the night.

How cool the wind seemed; the ground was white, the snow falling fast, too pure to touch me, yet I turned my face to it, but as I turned, I fancied I saw two figures through the darkness and snow, coming along the deserted street. Of one I was sure—a man with a load on his back, it seemed, but of the other I was not sure. I noticed the man suddenly quicken his pace and approach where I stood. I knew him now, curse him! the organ-grinder who had addressed me in the morning, and he did so again.

“Ah, bon soir, mon camarade; comment vous portez vous? have you staked your organ on a last throw of the dice, and lost?”

A fierce answer in my own voice was on my lips, but I remembered in time my assumed character, and spoke in a rough tone.

“What the devil is it to you if I staked it against all your saints and gods, and lost?”

“Oh, nothing, mon brave; nothing, if you played your soul against hell, and lost,” answered the man.

“Damn you!” broke furiously from me.

“Merci, vous-en,” said he, turning on his heel, laughing.

I stood, cursing my passion and imprudence, and watched him, with a vague alarm and fast-rising suspicion. Why did he turn back, instead of keeping his way on? Had he come up to me on purpose, and spoken with a purpose? guilt made me fear even such trifles. I saw his figure dimly through the driving snow pause near the spot from which he had quickened his pace before. I am sure he turned towards the houses, as if speaking to some one, and then instantly walk rapidly away, the way he had come.

Terror seized me—I scarcely knew of what or of whom, but of something; and I fled, turning constantly to look behind, to see it through the driving snow and darkness, and looking in vain; but walk as I would, it came on faster, a nightmare horror from which I could not fly. But I kept on madly, up one street, down another, to baffle my pursuer, if one there were beyond my crime, till at last I reached the miserable *ruelle* in which I lodged. Dared I stop there? no, not for an hour. Something stronger than myself impelled me still to fly, to escape from Paris, from France, even from Europe.

I dared not even pause to take more than a cloak, but escaped as I was, throwing aside the disguise I then had, as being the one I should be described under, and for a few hours trusting perforce to the sole disguise of a low, broad hat, and large winter cloak, the immense collar of which, drawn up, concealed all the lower part of my face.

But to pass the *barrières* at midnight might excite suspicion, and I waited until near four o'clock.

Then I fled.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LOUIS BONHEUR EARNS FOUR HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

THE darkness and dense snow-storm stood enemies to the Provençale that night, for in its obscurity and among a maze of small streets she at last lost the figure that had flitted on before her, and she stopped, worn and weary in body, but heart, mind, every faculty and nerve strung up to the highest tension. That the man in velveteen was St. Leger Wolfgang she felt sure enough to make her very heart beat with sickening hope and fear of having again lost him; everything

that Giovan' had related—the man's evident newness to his calling, and equally evident shame under it—his looking so long at the photograph—had struck her enough to rouse suspicion, now especially when her whole bent was to distrust everything; the man's appearing from a *maison-de-jeu*, more akin to what we call so emphatically “a gambling hell;” his watching Giovan'; and when the Parmese left her again, his instant flight—for flight it was, though he never went beyond a headlong walk; his constant, hurried looking back, convinced her that her suspicion was right, and when the man disappeared she stopped with a deep-uttered—

“Maladetta!”

And for a moment the girl felt stunned, but only for a moment. A mind like hers could not be inactive or crushed; driven from one hold it immediately turned to another, and did now.

The hour was late—between eleven and twelve—and Wolfgang could not leave Paris until morning, except on foot or in a private conveyance, in either of which case he could be traced, even if he left directly; if he waited till daylight she had at least six hours the start of him, for by that time he would be watched for at every outlet.

She could not communicate with M. Lamonte until early morning, and meanwhile—

“Meanwhile, Corsare mio,” said the weary child, “we must send for Monsieur Guido.”

The only telegraph-office open at that hour, the only one of which she knew, at any rate, was R——'s, which was a good distance from the neighborhood where she found herself; nor was it a very pleasant hour or safe neighborhood for a young and beautiful girl, though the wolf-hound was perhaps an effectual guardian from any personal annoyance. Still, neither hour nor place nor weariness daunted the Provençale.

“It must be—time is everything,” she muttered; and wrapping her snow-white mantle closer, she retraced her steps to the more busy quarters.

It was past one when the cameo-seller entered R——'s well-lighted, warm office, and addressed one of the clerks.

“Monsieur, I want a message sent to London; can you send it now?”

“In its turn, mademoiselle.”

“Pardon, monsieur, I will pay double, triple, but it must go now; it is for life or death.”

An older man, evidently of authority, interposed:

“Very well, mademoiselle; it shall go this moment: tell it me, if you please,” and he took his pen.

“Address,” said Anna de Laval, “to Monsieur di Schiara, No. 15 — Square, London. Come over directly with the warrant. Anna.”

“Your address, mademoiselle?”

“No, none; he knows it. You *will* send, monsieur?” she added, earnestly, as she paid the price.

“It is being sent now.”

"A thousand thanks. Good-night, monsieur."

"I know that face," said the elder man, when she was gone. "I have seen her, I think, selling cameos on the Boulevards. A warrant! There is a criminal in the question."

"Ay, I wonder how that foreigner—who is she?"

"Oh, a police-agent, no doubt. Schiara, you know, was the name of that famous man they had—that Italian;" and he once more turned to his work, while Fleur-de-Marie and her faithful hound made their way back to her lodging; and utterly worn out, both child and dog slept—the hound soundly, the girl fitfully, restlessly, wakefully, dreaming that she was doing wrong; and with the first dawn of the cold winter's morning she and her companion were up and abroad again.

It was not yet seven o'clock, but the wind had driven the snow into drifts, and a hard frost had frozen the ground to something of the consistency of stone.

The first thing was to get the exact description of the man in velveteen for Monsieur le Préfet Lamonte, and he, she knew, would prefer it first hand; so Anna-Marie went straight to the Rue d'Eau, to the house in which Giovan' Tofanni lodged. It was an old, narrow, dirty *ruelle*, with tall, quaint houses, in no very good repair, neglected and weather-beaten.

A dirty old woman was sweeping the snow from the door-step, but she stopped as the cameo-seller came up and addressed her in her courteous manner:

"Madame, will you have the kindness to tell Giovan' Tofanni to come out to me directly?"

"What!" said the woman, staring, "he is fast asleep still; it is only seven o'clock."

"Then he must wake, madame. Tell him," she said, quietly putting a five-franc piece into her hand, "that the cameo-seller wants him."

The woman went in. Anna de Laval paced up and down, not because of the cold, but because both body and mind were too utterly and painfully restless to stand still.

In a few minutes the Parmese came out, wide awake enough, courtly as ever.

"Good-day, mademoiselle; you are early."

"I have need. You must come with me to Monsieur le Préfet Lamonte; it will be worth your while."

"You are an agent of police, then?" said Giovan', as he followed where she led. "What am I wanted for?"

There was in his tone a slight tinge of apprehension, and Anna smiled.

"Fear nothing, my friend, I am not a police agent; and it is I who want you, I who will pay you for my employer. You are simply wanted to repeat to Monsieur le Préfet a minute description of the man in velveteen whom you saw yesterday."

"Oh, is that all?" with evident relief. "I do not like coming across the police; do you?"

"Oh, I am used to it," said the girl, carelessly. "I care nothing about them."

"Monsieur le Préfet will not be at his bureau at this hour."

"No; at his own residence, in the Rue de —, where we are going."

Giovan' said no more. Truth to say, he rather dreaded the préfet, as people of the humble class so often do dread officials of any kind; and when at last they reached the house, he fairly sheltered himself behind his companion.

"Monsieur le Préfet was not yet out of bed," she was told. She wrote a line on a card and sent it to him, and the servant shortly returned with a message,

"Monsieur would see her in ten minutes;" and she and Giovan' were shown into a small room to wait.

In a quarter of an hour the préfet appeared, and the Provençale told her story.

"Well," he said, gravely, "it may be him, mon enfant. I hope it is, for you and the count have been indefatigable in the pursuit. You," turning to the Parmese, "can give me the description. Will you do so?"

Giovan' gave a minute one, and Lamonte took it down on paper.

"Thank you." M. Lamonte was polite to every one. "That will do. Anna, you think he will leave Paris?"

"Yes, monsieur; without doubt."

"Good; then all the *barrières* must be watched, and orders given to look for him in the city also. I will see to it directly. I need scarcely ask you, who know your business so well, if you have telegraphed to Monsieur di Schiara?"

"I did, monsieur, at one o'clock this morning."

"Good, child. He may be here, then, by twelve o'clock. He will come to the bureau, so be there about midday. You, I suppose," he added, as Anna rose, "have power to employ and pay for information?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet. If the man has already passed the *barrières*—"

"I shall know it."

"I shall remain near your office, monsieur."

"Do so."

And with that they parted.

In the street the cameo-seller paused, and put some gold in Tofanni's hand.

"Accept it," she said, quietly, "for the present, and do not leave Paris till you hear from me again."

Giovan' looked at her and at the gold, and half laughed, puzzled and surprised.

"Per Bacco! the signorina is generous."

"No; only just," she answered, quickly. "Good-by, Giovan'."

Giovan' lifted his hat high, and returning the salute, turned to retrace his steps. The Provençale entered a café, and having taken some refreshment walked away towards the bureau of M. Lamonte,

to go through hours of watching and waiting, the heart-sickening suffering of hard endurance.

Hours—yes, only three hours as yet, for it was only eleven o'clock, though to her it had seemed as if each minute were an hour; to and fro, to and fro, never out of sight of the bureau, not feeling the outward cold of that winter's day for the internal fever of anxiety that seemed to burn her very heart.

She had paused for a moment listening to a neighboring church clock striking the hour of eleven, when a brisk step came along, a man passed her quickly, looked at her, stopped abruptly, and came back.

"A year has altered you," he said, "but I knew you, and your dog there; it is you who came to me a year ago at the Café Du-sèque."

"It was I, Monsieur Bonheur."

"Ha, ha! your memory is good too," said he, with a rough laugh; "but you are the very person I should have wished to meet, or I must have entered that bureau to earn my reward."

"Reward!" she repeated, drawing a long breath; "for what?"

"Ah, for what, ma'amselle? Four hundred pounds sterling offered for any news of one Wolfgang, to whom I sold that revolver. I was going to claim it of Monsieur Lamonte."

Anna-Marie grasped his arm like a vice.

"I will pay it you if you tell me your news; or are you lying?"

He laughed.

"If I could have got it that way, I would long ago; but you would have found me out, and Schiara is a merciless man."

"He is right; tell me what you know, and you shall have the money to-night."

"Well, I have just come into Paris from Maux in a carriage, and just beyond the village of L—I was looking out, when I saw a man walking along very quickly. He had a slouched hat and large cloak, but he glanced at the carriage, and I caught a glimpse of his face—it was Monsieur Wolfgang, I am sure; that was at nine o'clock, or near it."

"You are sure of him?"

"Sure; he is marked, you know."

"Holy Madonna! then he is run down at last, and the money is yours."

"This evening?"

"Yes, at this office. Good-by."

She turned away, all weariness gone, now that there was active work to be done, and once more entered the bureau and asked for the préfet. He saw her directly.

"Monsieur, I have news of the man. When the count arrives, tell him to mount instantly and follow me up the Maux road. Wolfgang was seen beyond L—at nine. I am going to follow him in a carriage."

"Not alone, my child; take a sergeant with you, if only for your own protection;" and he rang.

A quiet-looking man in plain clothes came in.

"Sortiges, you will accompany Mademoiselle de Laval, and be in every way at her orders."

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet."

And he followed her out.

* * * * *

The landlord of the principal *auberge* in the little village of L——, on the Maux road, stood at his door, smoking and gazing up the road towards Paris, when he saw a little black speck—it grew larger rapidly, came nearer, and dashed past him at a headlong speed—a carriage drawn by two horses all in a foam, and a large white dog following it.

"Mon Dieu!" cried the worthy Jacques, lifting his hands; "if they keep that pace round that sharp turn there will be an accident."

Almost as he spoke the carriage reached the sharp turn in the road just beyond the village, and the next moment he saw the off fore-wheel strike the bank, and the vehicle was thrown over, the horses struggling furiously in the traces.

The *aubergiste* and half a dozen men ran to assist, but even as they reached it one of the occupants of the carriage had got out and seized the nearest horse's head. She was a young girl, but she was perfectly cool.

"Pick up the poor coachman," she said, with that quiet air of command to which the lower class always give obedience in such a moment, "and help out monsieur from the carriage."

Two men seized the horses and another unfastened the traces; the *aubergiste* assisted out monsieur.

"Are you hurt?" Anna-Marie asked, anxiously.

"Oh no, mademoiselle; I am bruised, and my foot is hurt a bit. I cannot walk just a while. Never mind me; go on. Monsieur le Comte will overtake you," he added, in a low voice, "and the man may be concealed farther on. The carriage is not harmed, and shall follow when Monsieur le Comte comes up."

"Time is everything," said Anna, giving him some loose change; "they will take you to the *auberge* and summon a doctor. See to him and the coachman. Farewell. Venez, mon chien."

And she walked rapidly away, with Corsare panting still from his long run. She was a little bruised by the accident, but otherwise unhurt, for her hand had been on the window, and she had held on to it.

It was bitter cold, and the snow lay in drifts on the left side, but she heeded neither cold nor the hard rutty road, save a moment's pause every now and then to listen for the clatter of horses' hoofs.

Walking fast, sometimes running, she got over two miles in barely half an hour, and was still walking on, when Corsare suddenly stopped just where the edge of a considerable wood extended to the edge of the road.

"Ha! what is it, good dog, Corsare?"

The wolf-hound threw up his shaggy head, snuffing the frosty air with a low, fierce growl; then laid his nose to the ground, threw it

up again, and at last looked at his mistress, whose ear had just caught the distant sound of horses' hoofs.

"What is it?" she whispered, as the dog once more snuffed the air. "Go, then," she said.

The wolf-hound bounded forward, and plunged into the wood. Anna de Laval could feel every wild throb of her heart as she followed him.

MANUSCRIPT XXXII.

RETRIBUTION.

THEN I fled—I left Paris, left the faubourg—where I neither knew nor heeded—behind me, and gained an open road. I had walked as only a man can who is walking for life; and it was six o'clock before I dared slacken my pace and pause, to try and guess where I was. It was still dark, pitch dark, and freezing hard, but I had placed at least nine good English miles between me and Paris, I knew, by the pace I had kept and the stillness.

Oh, that fearful walk! the horrible terror that was in the darkness, in the rustle of the wind among the leafless trees as I passed! In everything there was but one voice, one word—Murder—and *his* face.

If any man, standing on the very brink of crime, shall chance to read this manuscript of a haunted man, let him pause and look beyond the meditated deed; let him not think to escape himself, for it is impossible; let him read this, the story of a murderer, and pause while he has time.

Oh, the hideous punishment of remorse! the awful looking back to what can never be again! to recall the deed done! is this the hell of which men talk? this the vulture that preyed ever on Prometheus?

I dared not pause, but pressed on madly; and when at last dawn broke, and daylight grew slowly upon me, I could see Paris dimly far away; in another hour I lost even that.

Once or twice I met country carts and peasants, but I hid myself while they passed, when I could, that there might be no trace of me.

Footsore, weary, and hungry, I came, somewhere near nine o'clock, to a village, and there at an *auberge* I ventured to stop for rest and refreshment. Of sleep I had had none the last night; and tired and cold and faint as I was, the warm room and breakfast had a painfully drowsing effect on me; but I dared not sleep yet.

It was past nine when I paid my reckoning and once more set out. They told me it was the road to Maux, and that there was another village farther on. I remember—I have too much cause to remember, curse it!—passing a *fiacre* driving rapidly towards Paris, but after that the road was solitary.

Two miles or so beyond L—— I came to a wood, a thick and extensive wood—more properly, perhaps, a small forest. I paused,

struck by the hope of escape and safety it offered. If I turned aside into it, my pursuers—if they were in very truth on my trail—would lose it and pass on, naturally thinking that I had gone on to Maux. If I could conceal myself there till dark, I might then hope to effect my flight in safety.

I took a flying leap over the snow, lest a footstep in it might give a clew, and plunged into the forest, carefully replacing boughs or brushwood that I had to move. Thus I made my way for fully half a mile, and then I came to a shut-in spot where one of the trees was a giant elm, close to which were the remains of a wood fire, the embers still warm.

I wrapped myself in my cloak and sat down, resting against the tree, and tried to think, to plan for my safety; but anxiety and fatigue of mind and body had done their work, and crushed my powers now when I most needed them, beneath the weight of heavy irresistible sleep and the torturing dreams which since *that* night had never left my slumbers.

When I lost consciousness I know not, or how long I remained I know not; but the cold probably numbed me, for hours must have passed.

What roused me and made me spring up and stand listening, too benumbed and chilled, too powerless to move, paralyzed with awful fear?

What was it? where was it? the deep bay of a hound from the high-road, the sound of cracking underwood. I heard it coming on, on, and could not move, not a step, not a finger. I tried to draw my pistol, but it fell from my powerless hand. The agony of a lifetime was crowded into those few awful moments, and I grew dizzy. There was a crash of broken wood, a rush, and it sprung upon me.

Then I fought with the dog madly, as only a murderer can fight for life, as only man can fight in the hideous struggle between man and beast—in desperate, silent horror. Great Heaven! it seemed hours, yet was but seconds. I saw her dizzily—that foreign child; I heard her voice—her words of stern command.

“Down! down! let go, Corsare!” and her grasp was on his collar. I staggered back with such a cry of despair as seemed in my own ears like the cry of a fallen spirit might have been.

I faced her, a desperate man, before whom she might well have quailed; but she never flinched. She had picked up my pistol, and held it in her left hand—on her guard, I felt.

She said sternly, pointing to the dog,

“I am going back to the road. If you stir one step, this dog will pull you down, and tear you as he would a wolf. You are warned. Corsare, lie down and watch him—watch!”

She turned and walked quickly away. The wolf-hound lay down two yards from me, with his head laid between his paws, and his eyes watching my face.

I leaned against the tree and folded my arms tightly across my breast, stunned, the power even of suffering paralyzed by the deadness of blank despair.

I knew that my race was run at last.

I covered my eyes to shut out that horrible, watchful, human gaze looking out of the dog's eyes. It might have been minutes, or hours, or years that passed—I knew, felt nothing: time itself stood still; but at last—and it seemed years since last night—footsteps came over the ground, and a tall, dark man stood before me. His hand was laid heavily on my shoulder, his voice spoke, thrilling, numbing me with its likeness to *his*:

“In the Queen's name, you are my prisoner!”

The touch of Guido di Schiara's hand, the sound of his voice roused my fierce hatred of the man, and its power gave strength and desperation. Only Anna-Marie was with him.

“*Your* prisoner? on what charge, and by what right?” I demanded, with the desperate boldness of despair.

“By right of this warrant,” he answered, sternly, “in virtue of which you are now going to London to be tried for the murder of Stewart Claverhouse.”

I made no answer, but with a mad impulse of preservation, threw off his hand, and sprung forward to fly—mad, mad! He had his hand upon me again in a moment, with a grasp of iron which, from its slenderness, would have seemed impossible; there was no escaping that hold.

He gave me a sting now beneath whose bitterness I writhed.

“I would,” he said, in the same deep, stern way, “have demanded your *parole* not to try that again, but that long ago you dishonored your name with a lie. I simply warn you that if you move a step for escape, I will manacle you like any felon in the galley. Anna, lead on to the road.”

She obeyed him, and we followed—he and I.

I was beaten—his captive—and I cursed him, by his gods, as I walked to the road at his side.

Standing in the road was a carriage and pair and two riding-horses, on one of which sat an Englishman, a detective in plain clothes; I was sure; the other must have been ridden by Schiara.

“Enter the carriage, monsieur,” he said, opening the door.

As I obeyed I looked in his face. I have wondered since—it crossed me vaguely even then—how it was that that man, *his* brother, could resist stabbing me where I stood.

Was I to be alone? if so, I might yet escape. I should have known him better. I saw him lift his hand to the cameo-seller, and she directly came to the door with her dog.

“Enter; lie down there,” she said, touching the front seat, “and watch him.”

The wolf-hound, but for whom I had now been free, leaped lightly in and crouched on the seat, a terrible companion, from whom there was no escape. The doors were shut fast, though the blinds were up, and Schiara lifted Anna to the box beside the driver; then he mounted, and took his position on that side, the English detective on the other. “My escort,” I muttered, with a bitter curse.

And we started. So for the last time I entered gay Paris, a guarded felon; I, Casper St. Leger Wolfgang.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEFORE LUNCHEON CHAT.

"So the fellow is taken at last," said the Honorable Laurence Cleves, a son of the Earl of Laneton, and now brother-in-law to Tom Dacre, and he came up to a group of young men and ladies, who, with his sister, Lady Maude, and her husband, were guests at his father's hospitable country-seat. "So the fellow is taken at last; here is the *Times*."

"And," said another, laughing, "here is Tom just back from town to tell us all the news. What 'fellow' is taken?"

"Why, just Wolfgang, the villain who robbed the world of its greatest sculptor."

"Are you joking?"

"Is he really taken?" cried the ladies.

"By Jove! I'm glad. Hanging is too good for the villain!" exclaimed the men.

"Tom, do tell us," said his wife, "for of course you know more than the papers. Is he taken?"

"Of course, my dear Maude; taken in, or rather near, Paris, brought to London, brought up before a magistrate, and committed for trial. I was there myself."

"What did he say for himself?" asked Cleves.

"Pleaded not guilty, but reserved his defence."

"*Not* guilty? what impudence! Why, that Roman cameo-seller—the Fiora di Maria, you know—saw the deed. How will he get over that?"

"My dear fellow, I don't know. He's got an Old Bailey attorney who will help him, I think, without being over-scrupulous."

"Was she there?" asked a young lady.

"Certainly, Miss Amphlett; her evidence committed him."

"Is she pretty?"

"The present company excepted," bowed courtly Tom, "she is, without question, the most beautiful girl I have ever seen—as beautiful in her peculiar style as Mrs. Stewart Claverhouse was in hers."

"Ah, poor young thing!" said Lady Maude, with tears in her eyes. "It was a most melancholy tragedy."

"When will he be tried, and where?" said another of the men.

"When? in a week or ten days. Where? at the Central Criminal Court. They would never get an impartial jury at Ernescliffe, so he is to be tried in London."

"Do you know who is retained for the prosecution?"

"Yes; for Cavagnac — Claverhouse, I mean — told me. He has told his attorney to retain Gus Seymour for his leader."

"Leader! Is Seymour within the Bar, then?"

"Just taken silk. Didn't you know it?"

"No; he's very young at the Bar."

"Ten or eleven years' standing. The luckiest fellow I know," said Tom Dacre. "He has every reason to be a Q.C. so early. He came to the Bar with every advantage."

"How so?"

"He is of good family and some private fortune. He came with a 'tail,' and a longish one too; and he is very clever, very clever indeed, and lucky. Even here he has his usual luck in holding his maiden leader brief in so famous a trial as this will be. It will make the man."

"I am so glad," said Lady Maude Dacre, "that Wolfgang is taken. For one thing, among others, we shall get the Count de Cavagnac—I beg his pardon, Guy Claverhouse—among our set again. A most fascinating man—he has so much of Il Angelo's wonderful charm."

"How odd to call him by an English name," said Miss Amphlett. "I shall always think of him as an Italian, which he is, in fact, except in actual blood."

"He should take an English wife to unforeignize him," laughed Lady Maude. "But, hark! there is the luncheon bell, and mamma beckoning us from the window. Tom, I mean to see the trial."

To which Tom, being still in the halo of honeymoonism, answered "that he was her dutiful slave," and the party adjourned to the house.

MANUSCRIPT XXXIII.

"I have set my life upon a cast,
And must abide the hazard of the die."

TEN days to my trial—*my* trial for murder, before all the world; my dishonored name a byword of execration in every mouth, my life suspended on the balance of a hair. If the period of suspense had been longer I should have gone mad beneath the torture of it.

My mother came, entreating to see me, but I refused. I would only see my attorney; and I told him—well, not what I had done, but enough to make him smile and prepare a defence.

"Trust to me," said Mr. Grainger, "to do my best; only do your part. Keep a cool steady front, and face the Court and crowd calmly. I grant it is a most trying and painful position for a gentleman, but still—"

Trying, painful! weak words to what it was. No language can describe its suffering and crushing disgrace. To stand there in a felon's dock, to endure the gaze of that crowd, to face those who had known me and called me, in ordinary *parlance*, friend; worse than

all, to know that I was guilty, and that I stood there to see the game for *my life* played out before my eyes. Yet I obeyed the injunction to do my part, and faced that crowd calm and collected outwardly; inwardly, who could tell the fire that was consuming me! Was it for this that I had satiated my fierce, jealous hate of the man I had slain? was it for this hour I had stained my hands in blood, and written murder on my brow? if so, the punishment was heavy indeed.

Let me tell it collectedly, if I can.

I looked round, but I felt the red flush cross my face as I saw the dense crowd below, and met the gaze of what seemed a thousand eyes. For a second my very brain reeled, and everything grew misty—only a second, and then again I looked.

Close below me were my attorney, my counsel, Mr. Edward Gemieson, Q.C., and his junior, Mr. Catesby; on the other side I saw, and started with a thrill of pain to see, my former school-fellow, Gus Seymour; and I wondered vaguely if his position pained him. Perhaps not. He had liked, more than liked, Stewart, and must feel only bitterness against me.

Near him I saw two I could not look at without a shiver of dread—the dark, stern face of Guido Claverhouse, and at his side the cameo-seller, dressed in black, looking what she was—a lady, a patrician.

I turned my glance restlessly for another form very different—my mother's, and I thought I saw her closely veiled.

Then came the empanelling of the jury, but I challenged no one. Each moment of delay was sickening torture. I was only thoroughly roused by an address which made me start and shudder.

"Prisoner at the bar, how say you—guilty, or not guilty?"

I lifted my head, and looking round, answered distinctly and deliberately,

"Not guilty."

But even as the words passed my lips I saw that bitter mocking smile on Guido di Schiara's handsome mouth, and I turned my gaze to Seymour. How little, years ago, when we were boys together, had either of us dreamed of this! Did it cross him, too, as he rose to open the case?

And then I had to listen to those clear sonorous tones telling the story of my crime.

He went back to the very beginning, assigning—and I knew Cagnac had told him—the true motives that had driven me on. I learned that the Provençale, ever quiet, languid, courteous, had been from first to last, with that guileful Italian, my evil genius; that both had been suspicious, and that she had been under his orders; that she had seen the man Gavannier, or rather Louis Bonheur, buy the revolver, and seen him subsequently sell it to me; that from that time hers and the count's suspicions had taken a darker form; and that from the day of Stewart's marriage I had been under surveillance, the girl watching me closely, as her wandering life gave her better opportunity of doing; that the night I went to D—— she was in the same train, and followed me—saw me to the small inn where

I hid rather than lodged, under the name of William Lang, and scarcely lost sight of me till *that* night.

I would fain have shut my ears, my senses, to that recital. There was a rushing sound in my head for a minute, but again the distinct voice recalled me to myself. The Provençale was in the witness-box. How lovely, oh, how beautiful she was, but how ill and weary she looked.

"What is your name?" asked Seymour.

"Anna-Marie de Laval, monsieur."

The same soft musical tones and delicate plaintive accent as of yore; but she stood there quiet, unmoved, steadfast. I felt that not even Edward Gemieson would shake her one inch.

"Your employment?"

"A Roman cameo-seller."

Gemieson rose fussily, addressing the Court.

"My lord, this witness is a foreigner, and I must ask that an interpreter—"

"Stay, Mr. Gemieson," said the judge, mildly. "Witness, can you speak English?"

"Yes, my lord."

"How long have you been in England?"

"I came to London nearly two years ago, my lord—early in March, able then to understand a little English. I was here six months, for I only went abroad again in the autumn."

"Very well. I think, Mr. Gemieson, an interpreter is unnecessary."

He bowed and sat down. Seymour went on:

"You came to England in March, two years ago, then?"

"Yes, monsieur; the latter end."

"Did you know Mr. Claverhouse, then going by the name of Count de Cavagnac?"

"Yes."

"Were you ever in any way employed by him?"

"I was; first, I think, in May, or thereabouts. I was employed to find out a man for whom the count was searching—one Louis Bonheur."

"And were you successful?"

"I was. I saw him the night of that violent thunder-storm, the 5th of June, and followed him. I saw him enter a gunsmith's shop in the Strand. His name was Stephen Hurne, and through the window I saw him buy a small pocket-revolver."

"Did you ever see the revolver again?"

"Yes; about a month afterwards."

"Under what circumstances?"

"It was," she answered, "one night that I had been at one of the theatres, and I saw two men come out of ——'s."

"The gambling-house?"

"Yes. I knew them both: one was Louis Bonheur, the other was Monsieur Wolfgang; they went on to the Quadrant, and then turned just under that archway, with the lamplight full on them. I crouched

in the shadow close by, and heard and saw plainly. Bonheur showed the revolver, and wanted Monsieur Wolfgang to buy it. He would not at first, but suddenly changed. 'Yes, I'll buy it,' he said; 'it might be useful some way or another; only it's got a mark—letters on it.' Bonheur said it was nothing, and Monsieur Wolfgang took it and paid two pounds, remarking, 'The only gold I have about me, and they happen to be Australian sovereigns.' They parted, and Monsieur Wolfgang went away with the revolver."

"Went away with the revolver?" repeated Seymour; "now, Mademoiselle de Laval, was that the only time the count employed you?"

"No, monsieur; by his orders I watched Monsieur Wolfgang—from the day of the maestro's"—for a second her voice faltered, then she went on firmly—"from the day of Mr. Stewart Claverhouse's marriage, but nothing came of it particularly until after his return to London, after he and his wife left town for Ernescliffe, where the count joined them."

"Well, did anything come of it then?"

"Yes; the evening of the 12th of August the prisoner" (I started; it was the first time she had called me so) "left his house and went down to D——. I heard him take his ticket, and went down in the same train, following him when he left D—— station. He took up his residence in a small inn, the 'Anchor,' kept by one Rook; by day he remained there, but at night he walked out into Ernescliffe Park, and prowled about sometimes near the Hall."

"How long did this go on?"

"Eight days, monsieur. The night of the 20th I followed him into Ernescliffe Park, till he sat down under a tree and lit a cigar. I left him there, and went down on to the beach close by to refresh myself, for I had had little sleep that week, and none at all for forty-eight hours. I sat down behind some rock on the beach, with my dog by me, and, overcome with weariness, fell asleep."

Again she paused; I knew what agony she was enduring, but not such as I suffered.

"What awoke you?" asked Seymour.

"Monsieur, the voice of the maestro, answered by that of Monsieur Wolfgang. Instantly fearing, ready for the worst, I rose, and stood where I could see as well as hear. At last Monsieur Wolfgang, after upbraiding him, said furiously, 'You believe in a God; go, then, tell him this night how Casper Von Wolfgang dares and defies him!' and that second, before even my hound could move, he drew a revolver and shot the maestro. I sprung forward and caught him as he fell; my dog seized Monsieur Wolfgang, but he stunned him with the weapon, hurled it at me, and fled."

Seymour gave her a moment, seeing, as I did, that her lip was quivering; then resumed:

"It was night, and stormy; how, then, could you see who shot the deceased?"

"The moon was shining, and I distinctly saw the man's face."

"Now, look round, and say, on your oath, if you see it anywhere."

Oh, that grim mockery! Anna de Laval had never once looked even towards the dock; but now, when there was dead silence, when I felt my heart beat as if every throb were its last, she turned, fixed her stern, melancholy eyes on mine, and half lifting her slight hand, said, with a look and tone that haunts me now with its horror,

"That is the man."

I folded my arms tightly, striving to stifle my heart, striving to endure her steadfast gaze; but my eyes sunk—*I could not bear it.*

The judge addressed her:

"Witness, think well on the grave responsibility of your position. Are you positive?"

"My lord, I am positive that the prisoner is the man I saw murder Stewart Claverhouse."

There was a sensation, an indescribable murmur, instantly checked by the usher, and Seymour resumed:

"What became of the revolver which the prisoner hurled at you?"

"When Monsieur de Cavagnac and others came to the maestro's assistance, I picked it up."

"You have stated that it had a mark—letters; what were they?"

"Three words engraved on one of the barrels, 'Vive la Commune.' Bonheur is, or was then, a Communist."

"Should you know it again?"

"Certainly, monsieur." I fancied Anna looked surprised.

"Understand me," said the counsel, impressively, "and remember how much depends on your answers. Can you swear to the weapon at this distance of time?"

"I can."

"After you picked it up, what did you do with it?"

"It was in my hand till after the death of Mr. Stewart Claverhouse, then I examined it closely, and delivered it over to the count, who has it still, I believe."

Seymour took something from his client; I saw them—three small revolvers, to all appearance fac-similes.

"Now, tell me which of these is the revolver that you picked up and delivered to the Count de Cavagnac?"

Would she fail? if so—no; she stooped slightly and laid her hand on the middle one, taking it from him.

"This is the revolver."

"Are you sure? by what do you know it from these of the same maker, which are just like it?"

"By several small things. One of the barrels is graven with the words 'Vive la Commune,' and this barrel is a shade smaller in the bore than the other two: the end of the stock, or but-end, whichever it is called, is slightly bruised, probably by the violence with which it struck the rock when flung at me."

"That will do."

The revolver was handed up to the court, and I looked anxiously down at my attorney, Grainger. He smiled scornfully, as if to say, "Nothing at all; I'll blow all this to the winds."

But I took no hope; even Gemieson could not browbeat Anna-

Marie. He now rose to cross-examine her, and from his questions I began to see at least part of Grainger's game of defence.

"You are, or were, a cameo-seller, you said?"

"I was."

"That is, ostensibly," added Gemieson with a sneer; "but that was not your only means of living?"

"Monsieur, I do not see what my means of living has to do with the question," said Anna, coolly.

"I dare say; a foreigner is not likely to do so," said the counsel, blandly; "but I insist on an answer to my question."

"You asked none, Monsieur l'Avocat. You made a remark."

"I ask you whether you lived merely by selling cameos?" said he, slightly raising his never very gentle voice. "You were a model, were you not, to artists and sculptors?"

I saw her proud lip curl. She saw his drift plainly, though she answered quietly,

"I was not a professional model. I sat only to the first artists, and never to any sculptor but Il Angelo—pardon, Stewart Claverhouse."

"Indeed; you were particular in your favors. Now, you stated that you knew the Count de Cavagnac. How long was it since you first met him?"

"Two years next March."

"What is your age?"

Seymour looked up, and seemed half amused, half inclined to object to such irrelevant questions, but he did not; and Anna answered,

"I am not yet seventeen; I was then just fifteen."

"You were very intimate with Monsieur de Cavagnac, according to your own showing, young as you were," said he, with another broad sneer.

I saw Guido di Schiara lift his handsome face, with a dark frown and fierce gleam in the dark eyes, then set his teeth hard and fold his arms, with such a face as a man only wears when he is forced to sit and hear the woman he loves insulted.

Over Anna's beautiful face a flush passed, leaving it colorless as before; but though there was no other outward sign, I knew how her proud, sensitive womanhood writhed.

She looked her questioner in the face, and answered,

"I was not 'very intimate' with the count. There could be no intimacy between a man of his position and a cameo-seller. He simply employed me as a detective, and paid me, as he paid any other agent."

"Hum; that will do for the present."

She left the witness-box. Who was coming next?

That little French Republican from whom I had so madly bought a marked weapon—Louis Bonheur.

What was his evidence? A link, a strong link. He swore positively that he had sold a revolver to me, that the one now shown him was the one, and that I—the prisoner—was the man who bought

it, paying two Australian sovereigns. Gemieson could not shake him.

They were determined to prove that fatal revolver into my hands and out of it. Seymour called the count, and every eye turned on him. No wonder. He was a noble, handsome man—more, he was a most striking and distinguished-looking man.

“I shall not trouble you much. What is your name?” began Seymour.

“Guido Egmont Claverhouse, better known as Count de Cavagnac.”

I shivered at his voice, so like—oh, so like! his murdered brother’s.

“Permit me, then, to call you so. Look at these three revolvers. Were ever one or more of them in your possession?”

“Yes; this one.” He took it up. “On the night of the 20th August in question, as I was lifting my brother Stewart from the ground, I saw Anna de Laval pick it up, and she had it in her hand till after his death, then she gave it to me. ‘Take it, monsieur,’ were her words; ‘it is the marked revolver which I saw Monsieur Wolfgang buy of Bonheur.’ Ever since I have had this weapon in my possession.”

“That will do. Mr. Gemieson, do you cross-examine?”

He declined. “He would not trouble the court yet,” to my surprise.

The prosecution was ended. I knew, at least, the worst they had to say.

Edward Gemieson rose up, tall, burly, important, and spoke, eloquently, certainly, but not as Gus Seymour had spoken.

I think I was the person in that court most astonished at the defence. It was short, after all.

He said that his client had never bought, never even seen, the revolver then in court, and that at the very time it was asserted that he was at Ernescliffe he was with his mother in town, as he should prove. His client had never left London till the day *after* the murder of the unfortunate sculptor, and he had then gone to D—under the name of William Lang, in order to meet and get rid of a woman who had been his mistress some years before. He had returned to town, when it reached him that he was charged with a crime of which he knew nothing, and by his mother’s advice he had gone abroad for a time—unwisely, perhaps, but not unnaturally. As to the motive assigned, he really wondered that his learned friend had named anything so absurd. The accused and Stewart Claverhouse had always been most friendly. Then he went on cautiously, but plainly, to charge the witnesses with at least “a strong mistake” as to identity and the facts stated. In fine, what he meant, and what the court must have understood, was, that I was the victim of a plot, the motives for which were plain. Both Egmont Claverhouse and Anna de Laval hated the accused, the latter because he, the accused, had once made her understand that he perfectly understood the relations with the count, as he should prove. “And,” he concluded, “is a man in the position of the accused—a man of birth

and wealth, an English gentleman!—is his life to be sworn away by a common Roman cameo-seller, an artists' model? and we all know what *they* are; could they rely on the oath of such a girl, to whom it was nothing to perjure herself for the sake of her hatred or her lover?"

He said everything, in fact, to discredit her evidence; he only just stopped short of saying, in plain words, that Anna—Anna, who had so bitterly resented my shameful insult—was nothing better than the mistress of Guido Claverhouse.

I had sunk low, indeed, to take away a girl's name, and that a stranger, a foreigner. If they had told me this! but I started; I had almost spoken out "to spare her," when I saw him actually put her again into the witness-box; what for but to make her own pure lips condemn her! How would she bear it? She stood erect, proud, calm, that grand air of dignity I knew so well, patrician in every line of her stately form and classic half-Italian face.

"You have asserted that you went to D—— on the 12th of August; now, at this distance of time how can you swear to a date?"

"I have every reason to remember it, even if I had not noted it down."

"You say you followed a man whom you assert to be the prisoner; are you sure that it wasn't the Count de Cavagnac you followed to Earnescliffe?"

"Quite sure, monsieur," she said, coolly.

"But you were there with him at the Hall after the death of Mr. Claverhouse?"

"Monsieur mistakes," she said, sarcastically. "I was not there with the count, but with the signora, Mrs. Claverhouse; and when she died I left."

The answer was more than he meant. Mrs. Claverhouse was not likely to be intimate with a girl of questionable character. He passed on.

"Now answer on your oath—Did you not dislike the prisoner?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Ah, I thought so," said he, complacently. "You hated him because he told you that he knew how you stood regarding the count; insulted you, shall I say?"

"The prisoner did insult me"—and I was confounded by her perfect calmness and control—"but not as you insinuate; the count's name was not even alluded to or meant. The prisoner tried to force from me something which I refused to tell; he threatened law; I laughed at his threats, and then he said, 'Do you think I don't know on whose protection you rely?' His insult alluded to the maestro."

"So you say," remarked Gemieson; "other people may think otherwise."

Then he tried to shake her evidence, striving to make out that she had obtained the revolver from Bonheur, and suborned his evidence; but it was more than useless, and he let her go.

Next he called the man Rook and his wife, of the "Anchor" in D——, who both deposed that I had never come there till the 21st

of August, and had only remained a day; and then he called a woman whom I recognized as my mother's maid. She swore positively that on the 20th of August I was in the town-house. Seymour cross-examined all three, but they were firm. He sat down.

"And now," said Gemieson, rising, "I call Mrs. St. Leger Wolfgang."

I started violently and irresistibly, and bent forward as my mother came forward; but I saw Cavagnac whisper to Seymour, and as the clerk approached her to administer the oath, the latter rose.

"My lord, I object; this lady is an atheist, and cannot, therefore, be sworn."

A sensation again; it seemed to strike horror into the crowd. Hypocrites! were they better than us? I trembled, but my mother was unmoved. She turned, and said distinctly, as she threw up her veil,

"My lord, the learned counsel is misinformed. I am *not* an atheist, and I desire to be put upon my oath."

The judge bent his head, Seymour sat down; but as my mother was sworn, I saw that old bitter, mocking smile on Cavagnac's lips and on Anna's.

I knew, as they did, the true value of her declaration; but if it saved me, what cared I?

She, too, swore positively that I was in town with her on the 20th of August, and that that revolver had never been in my possession.

Seymour did not cross-examine, but rose at once to make his reply.

Then all his eloquence was poured out in a speech which pulled down the defence and charges against his witnesses as easily as a child destroys a house of bricks. He ridiculed the idea that Anna-Marie de Laval could have been mistaken as to the man she saw murder the sculptor, and stigmatized as shameful and disgraceful the attempt to damn the reputation of a young girl, for whom it was, perhaps, enough to say that she had been the friend and *confidante* of the late Mrs. Claverhouse.

Then the judge summed up shortly and concisely, and the jury retired.

There was a hush. I leaned forward, not sick or dizzy, not deadened. I have heard people talk of their heart standing still at some trifle, but they knew not what that is. My heart stood still now; it was paralyzed. I saw nothing, felt nothing, but the awful sense of horror. Did time pass? Were those faces below me, or demons? But when they came back, and I lifted my head, it seemed years ago that they had left.

"How say you, gentlemen of the jury, guilty or not guilty?"

Was not that one moment of silence that followed punishment enough in itself for my crime?

"Guilty!"

* * * * *

Was it all a hideous dream from which I should awake? the faces below seemed so distant and small. Was that a voice that seemed so far off? Who had they tried for his life? Who was that strange

old man with the black cap on condemning to be hanged by the neck till he was dead?

Then distinctly rousing to the knowledge of the truth, I heard the words—

"And may God have mercy on your soul."

God! if there was a God, I had defied him! if I had a soul, I had played it against hell—and lost.

Body and soul lost forever.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"We hung our harps on a willow-tree."

THERE was a dense crowd outside the court; so dense that most of the carriages which had brought their titled owners could not get near it. Two or three had, and among these that of Lady Maude Dacre; and out of the window looked that lady's pretty face, as she spoke to her husband, who stood by the door waiting till the carriage could move on.

"Cruel, shameful," she was saying, "to try and blast that girl's name, a young thing of sixteen or seventeen; a lady, too, Nina's friend. She told me her sad story, and I for one shall show what I think."

"So shall I," said Dacre, quietly; "and there is Claverhouse with her on his arm. Peste, they are recognized and cheered. How vexing for them! he'll never get her to his carriage."

"He is nearer ours." She leaned out as Guido and his young companion approached, and said out loud,

"Mr. Claverhouse, you will never get a lady through this; put Mademoiselle de Laval into my carriage, and take my husband into yours."

"Merci, mille fois, madame. Anna, Lady Maude will kindly put you down in — Square. You will go!"

"If monsieur pleases; if I do not intrude on Madame Dacre."

"No, no; of course not. Open the door, count."

He handed Anna-Marie in, and then lifted Lady Maude's hand to his lips, and said, in a low voice, so like Stewart's that it might have almost been the dead she heard,

"I understand, and shall never forget your kindness in thus sheltering with your name and rank a young girl who to-day has no protection from the insult but her purity and gentle blood; to-morrow my name will protect her for life."

"Ah, your name."

"To-morrow will see Anna de Laval my wife," he answered; and bending low, walked away with Dacre, while the carriage moved on.

When it drove up to the well-known house that had been the great sculptor's, Guido was already there awaiting them, and handed out

the Provençale, who, with a grateful "Adieu, madame," ascended the steps; but Lady Maude detained Guido.

"I want to speak to you," she said, "only you must forgive me. To-morrow is your wedding—"

"Pardon," he said, with a grave sadness that touched her; "it is a marriage; there will be no wedding for us."

"Forgive me my mistake; it will be very quiet!"

"Very quiet, very private; only Doctor John, who gives Anna away, and Luigi Padella. You remember him? It could not be otherwise;" he paused a second, and then added, "our betrothal was at *his* death."

Maude Dacre could not answer for a moment.

"I understand you, count; but is it wise to be so almost secret, after what has been said about her to-day in a public court? You are a man of the world, and know how very light a breath will harm a woman, especially one so peculiarly placed as Anna de Laval; in after-years, you know, people might shrug their shoulders, even at Mrs. Claverhouse of Ernescliffe, and whisper about her former life and private marriage. Let me fetch her this evening from her lodgings, and take her with Tom and myself to the church."

"Lady Maude, you are a true-hearted, noble woman;" and strong as was the man's self-control, his delicate lip quivered and his deep soft tones faltered. "I accept your kindness; I shall never forget it."

"This evening, then; where are her apartments?"

"It is I who am in my old place in B—— Street. She is here with my uncle."

"Then perhaps I had better call for her in the morning. At what hour?"

"Nine o'clock, Lady Maude." It was all he could answer; and bending over her hand, he turned and entered the house.

Luigi met him in the hall.

"At what hour to-morrow will the signor leave town?"

"At twelve, amico; you are glad to revisit our bell' Italia?"

"Sì, signor, now that the *maladetto* is condemned. Oh, signor mio; but *that* will not bring us back our dead!" he said, with a burst of grief.

"Hush, hush! for God's sake," said Guido, hurriedly. "I dare not look back or think; it is too much agony."

And he passed quickly on to the library, where Doctor John and Anna-Marie awaited him.

Corsare jumped joyfully upon him, but with a caress he put him down, and turned to tell them what had passed.

"Maude Dacre," said the old man, after listening, "is a true, pure woman, and defends a sister from shameful slander. Anna has told me all; it was worthy of Casper Von Wolfgang. But after to-morrow she is safe. You will know how to protect your wife."

"I shall, indeed," he answered. "My wife, my only love!" and he clasped her to his breast, as he had not done since the night his brother had given her to his love and care.

* * * * *

It was no wedding; there were no favors or rich raiment, no white dresses and veils, no guests and feasting; it was a marriage, holy indeed, for love was there, but sad. "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" the Psalmist touchingly sings of the exiles; and sorrow had stricken these two very heavily, with a shadow that would last their lives. But it was a holy marriage, sanctified by a love made holy by such affliction as falls on few, hallowed by the spirit of the dead.

Yet not dead, but sleeping; for Art is holy, and the great die not, neither in heaven, neither on earth.

MANUSCRIPT XXXIV.

"All was ended now—the hope, and the fear, and the sorrow."

AM I alone? am I a felon, condemned to death for murder? Will they hang me in three weeks? Only twenty-one days between me and death! How can I die—how can I die with that awful load of guilt upon my head?

Alone! Do I crouch in a corner, covering my eyes with my manacled hands, because I am not alone; because the narrow cell is crowded with hideous phantoms; because each ghastly form has my face; because there is blood on the bare walls, on the stone floor? Alone! when it is lying there in the moonlight, a murdered corpse; when I hear the moaning ocean and that foreign child's never-forgotten cry; when I see Nina's dead face and white hair, and remember what she was, and the ruin my hand has made?

Does it seem a dream, that long, long ago? Can it be true that I was ever young and innocent and free? Is this chained convict, this haggard, gray-haired, haunted man, *myself*, or some hideous demon? Where is gay, handsome St. Leger Wolfgang? Do I look forward to death with such agonized horror and terror of despair as can only be known to such as I am, for whom there is *no hope*, for whom there is nothing but this earth—and this earth lost?

Oh that I could believe! Oh that I had one grain of that Roman girl's simple faith to light me out of this darkness of doubt and vain longing, this hell of myself!

I am going mad with sin and misery and despair. Oh, for life, only life! Will nothing save it? it is all I have, all I have, and they will take it.

* * * * *

Give me paper, pens; let me write; and oh, if in years to come any who are young and innocent read my story, let them remember that I, too, was once innocent, and throw one ray of pity into the execration they heap upon the name of Casper Von Wolfgang—ay, even though he was an atheist and a murderer.

* * * * *

She came—Georgine, my mother. Was she changed, as I was? was that wrinkled, haggard woman the once superb Georgine Von Wolfgang? was it my work, too, or her own?

“Casper, my son; oh, my son!”

I recoiled with a cry, putting out my chained hands.

“Don’t touch me, mother! there is blood between us—blood and misery and awful sin. Looking back in years to come, forbear to curse the son who has disgraced you, for you have made me what I am. Ay, reproach me bitterly for the word, if you will—it is true. You who taught my child-lips to scoff and sneer at all which men call holy, and shut out all that was good and gentle; you who put another devil into me, as if *that* were needed, and urged me on to revenge, when you should have let me weep away my sin upon your heart. O mother! O mother! if years ago you had taught me differently, I should not have stood here now, a murderer, doomed to death, without a future, without hope, without a God. Oh that I had died when I was born! I had never then been damned, body and soul.”

“Soul!” she broke out, “what is it? what is a Deity? We have lived in atheism; die in it: at least, trouble ends in the grave. Sin! who calls it so? Why reproach yourself with crime? there is no God, no responsibility. What law but man’s makes it sin to take life? Was I perjured to swear as I did? No.”

“Mother, mother! if, after all, *he* was right. If I had listened to him—”

“*He*, Casper? he was a dreamer!”

“Wiser in his dreams than we are in our hard philosophy,” I said, hiding my face. “No more, no more of him. I cannot bear the torture.”

She stood looking at me, her breast heaving, her fingers locked.

“Mother, what will become of you when—when I am gone?”

“I shall go forth alone and desolate, to hide my shame in another land,” she answered; “to die as I have lived, free from the enslaving cant of priests and school-men.”

There was a long silence, which she broke at last, as if it tried her.

“Did you believe the charge against that thrice-accursed Provençale?”

I started.

“No; she was—she is pure, at least.”

“Was she?” she sneered. “He has married her.”

“Married her?”

“Ay; Guido Claverhouse has married Anna-Marie de Laval, the sometime cameo-seller, and taken her to Italy for two or three years. Dr. John Fantony went also.” She rose, and moved a step. “My time is ended. I must come again. You will see me?”

“No; leave me. I am a felon.”

She drew her mantle about her, and paused.

“Must we part so? I, who bore you? Can even blood wash out my motherhood?”

Her voice trembled—*her* voice, and I looked up startled. She stretched out her arms.

"Casper, my son! in shame and guilt and blood, still my son, my son!"

I fell at her feet, and darkness closed over me. The last thing I heard was her passionate weeping and the clank of my heavy chains on the stones.

* * * * *

I was alone again, but I turned my face to the hard wall, to shut out the day and the hum of life without those prison walls.

I heard the cell door open and the jailer's voice asking if I would see the chaplain; but I refused fiercely, as I had done before. "I wanted no priests; I had lived and would die without them."

The door shut fast; yet after a while I felt that I was not alone, and, lifting my head, sprung up with a burning brow of shame.

I knew that tall figure, that grand benevolent face and steady dark eye—not the jail chaplain, but Dr. Harrington.

"You here!" I gasped; "you?"

"The chaplain is ill," he answered, in his old quiet, gentle way, as he sat deliberately down. "I am doing duty for him."

"Leave me, Dr. Harrington; I want no priest. Why do you come to *me*, a felon, a manslayer!"

"The Son of God," he answered, quietly, "came to heal those that are sick, not those that are whole. You say you do not want a priest. My son, my friend, you need a God and a future."

Friend! son! Was he sneering? he, the upright man, call a felon friend? mock me with a future? Yesterday I should have laughed him to scorn, even in my misery; but that last scene with my mother had softened me. More than all, in his words, in the almost grand pity of his gray eyes, there was an echo, a shadow of the one who was dead; as if the halo of the sculptor's spirit looked on me, filled the narrow cell, and brought back strangely and dreamily his beautiful soul-lit face, his wondrous voice, his look, his every word, not with torturing agony, as of late, but as it used to be long ago, soothing and calm. Was it to be so, after all? was the mystic influence that in his lifetime had charmed and would have lifted me up, to reach me still, even beyond the grave? was he to touch me, his murderer, as I would not be touched in life? Dead! Did such as he die? Is there something that lives still? Was I, on the grave's brink, beginning at last feebly, as one yet groping, to comprehend the secret of his answer, and his strange influence in life and in death? Was it the wondrous power of his SOUL?

"Teach me what it is—this immortality in which *he* believed; this mighty God in whom *he* trusted."

I sat down bodily at this man's feet, looking physically in his countenance, and hearing his voice; but something within me was at the sculptor's feet. My spirit—let me say it now—my soul saw his deep, steadfast eyes, my soul heard the music of his voice, not afar off, but within my very heart, my better angel.

* * * * *

Is that the hum and murmur of a vast multitude, gathering already to witness the sight—my execution? Do I hear it? Does the pen tremble in my hand, and my face blanch in the moonlight? It is trembling now, but I lay it on the open Book of God at my side; and then, slowly growing upon me, I feel, as I used to feel it years ago, the holy presence of my better angel.

Will the all-just, all-merciful God hear me, even me, at this eleventh hour? I know not; I have dared to believe, dared to hope humbly for pardon, dared to bow myself before the Almighty.

I hear them knocking outside the prison, but it cannot move me. I am past that now, for my life is forfeited, and my sands are run out. Hush! the bell is tolling, they are coming: the crowd without are thirsting for the sight. Well, so be it. Dr. Harrington stands there waiting to receive this manuscript, to do with as he deems best. Perhaps, if any should read this sorrowful story it may serve to warn them off the awful rocks upon which I wrecked my life; and let them—if they can—pray for one whose only hope is in God's mercy, whose only dirge is the hoarse murmur of a blood-thirsty multitude: *his* requiem was the eternal music of the deep-rolling ocean.

THE END.

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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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